

It Seems That I've Slipped Into a Different World. Also, My Gender Has Changed

Arc 2 – Summer of Encounter

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Chapter 32: Being Cozy, Early Summer's Noon

While digesting various things that happened, the spring has ended. Incidentally, I have had The Circulation several times. Little by little, it's true that they really get more comfortable, so I'm saved by it.

As of now, we are in the middle of the 6th month, so after half a month later, there will be the week of Summer Purification. If I were to replace it with the terms I'm familiar with, it'd be the [Obon Festival](#), but if it's really similar to Obon, I wonder why there seems to be quite a lot of people—including the servants—who return home. From my house alone, there seem to be quite a lot of people who are taking their days off during that period.

“...Uhm, Seiren-sama.”

“Hm? What's wrong, Alica-san?”

Alica-san came this morning and timidly reported something. Well, I wonder what it is.

“Uhm, actually, I would like to take some days off for the week of Summer Purification...”

“Days off? That's fine... ah, are you returning home?”

“Y, yes. Uhm, it's okay if it's impossible...”

“It's no problem, no problem at all. You are going home, right?”

I see, returning home, huh. If there is a home to return to and you want to go back, then you should better return home.

To me, up until just recently, the home that I could return to was the orphanage.

“So, why are you asking for days off to me? Shouldn't you ask it from my parents?”

“Usually, it's like that, but since we are now accompanying Seiren-sama, first we should ask for Seiren-sama's permission.”

“Oh, so it’s that kind of thing, huh. Understood, I will ask Kaa-san after this.”

“Sorry for the trouble.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine. In exchange, I’m looking forward for your souvenir.”

“Ah, yes. Please leave it to me.”

There seems to be a custom of giving souvenirs, and so Alica-san smiled pleasantly at my words. The maid uniforms that she and Minoa-san wear are thinner than the ones they wore during the first time I came here, and the blue color was also getting brighter.

I thought that these kinds of uniforms would stay the same all around the year, but it seems that they change depending on the season. Well, I also change my clothes according to the season. That’s obvious.

By the way, the male employees including Yuzuruha-san also changed their uniforms to jackets without any lining, although in the first place they’d wear vest inside the mansion. The sleeves are still long, but I think that they feel refreshing to look at.

“Seiren-sama, too, please don’t miss your dance practices even during the Summer Purification week.”

“I know. In some way or another, I think I’m getting used to wearing high heels.”

Yeah. I also thought that I was going to be told that, as expected.

By the way, somehow I managed to walk without wavering, and I have begun my practice on the dance steps slowly. Saryuu also seems to be practicing hard, but I wonder when will he be my dancing partner?

Now then, Alica-san takes a few days off during Obon. Speaking of which, the other two didn’t say anything. Since it’s a day off for Oriza-san, the only one inside the room is Minoa-san.

“Minoa-san, aren’t you taking some days off, too? Oriza-san too.”

“Well, I’m originally from this town, so as long as I go home during my days off, then it’s okay. As for Oriza... now that I think about it, I haven’t heard about her. She doesn’t seem to be taking days off during this time, too.”

“Is that so?”

I see. If that's the case, I wonder if it's alright with Minoa-san? I think that it's alright for her to take days off and stay at her home once in a while.

But, it's my first time hearing that Minoa-san was born near here.

Hmm, *ah*! So, that's the case.

“...could it be that it was a custom in your family to eat the Spring Festival's cake, even before you came to work here, Minoa-san?”

“.....”

Sorry, it's my bad for bringing that up again. Minoa-san's face is turning red right now.

But, it can't be helped if you've been eating it year by year.

I wonder if she can eat it as usual next year. Me, too.

“Alica is taking days off? Understood. I will properly arrange it.”

“Thank you very much, Kaa-san.”

During lunch time, I asked Kaa-san about Alica-san. Since it seems to be fine, I feel relieved.

Today's lunch consists of sandwiches and scrambled eggs accompanied by fresh salad, and in addition, there's a [consommé](#) soup. I wonder if it's added because it might upset the stomach if we only eat cold things.

After taking a spoon of the soup, Tou-san seemed to remember something and said.

“Ah, come to think about it, it's the Summer Purification soon. Yuzuruha is staying, but some people are having their days off requests.”

“If there are people who want to go home, then please let them. Because I also understand the saying on how your own house is the best.”

“...I see. Then let's properly arrange it for them.”

When I requested my father that, he nodded after thinking for a while.

For me, I feel that the Shiiya house has gradually becoming *[my home]*. Of

course, it doesn't mean that I have forgotten about the director and the orphanage that brought me up for 18 years.

That's why, if there's a home to return to, then I wish to let the people who want to go back home to return. I think that's quite important for them.

The sweets that appeared after the meal was a jelly with a pretty color similar to lemons. When I try to eat it a little using the spoon, it tastes like a sour orange.

Anyway, while eating the jelly, Tou-san said this to me.

"Seiren, there's a villa in the mountain. Would you like to go there during the Summer Purification?"

"Eh, a villa, is it?"

"Well, to be accurate, it was our former residence. Since it was quite inconvenient, we built this mansion and moved here."

"Hee..."

"I have ever been there during summer. I think that it's a perfect place to spend the time during this period. Since it's on top of the mountain, it's nicely refreshing."

Ah, so Saryuu has ever been there. That's right, he must have spent countless summers after coming into the Shiiya house. But for me, this will be my first summer.

Also, there was another reason as to why Tou-san recommended me to go to the villa.

"Our ancestor's grave site is near there. In this chance, it would be good for you to give your greetings."

"That's right. The grave site is located in the spot with good scenery, so you can go while taking a leisure walk."

"Visiting the grave, huh... Yes, I understand."

Yes, the week of Summer Purification also serves as the time to visit graves. That's why, it feels like Obon.

By the way, apparently the hottest time is indeed around the 8th month, as one would expect it's the same way in this world. But, Obon comes first before that. That's why, it seems like there is a separate holiday for Obon and summer holiday respectively. People who don't take their days off during the week of Summer Purification usually take their days off during the summer holiday in August.

Since the incident that happened during the Spring Festival, I haven't taken any single step outside this mansion. Nah, the mansion itself is really vast, so there wasn't a problem in the first place. The flower garden's variety changed alongside the changing seasons, as the green color steadily grew deeper, and it was fun to watch the process every day.

As one would expect, the farm is outside the premise, or so it seems, and there, we kept what were known in this world as goats and chickens. More or less, the goat also had the same four legs, and the chickens were very small birds but they had two legs, so, when you put it like that, it was quite understandable.

Well, since there were dance lessons, language studies, etc, I was good even without going outside, but it doesn't seem okay to my parents who are looking at me from my side. Ah well, since it's bad for me if I were to honestly say that they are such doting parents (*oyabaka*), so I won't say it.

In other words, it seems like they gave me that recommendation in order to give me a change of pace, since I haven't been outside the house.

"About how it was quite inconvenient in the mountain, is it about how cold the winter could get?"

"Well, things like that. Although the temperature doesn't rise during the summers, it remarkably grows cold during winters. It was good nevertheless in the past."

"I have heard about it from the previous supervisor, it seemed that snow piled up during winter and it became nearly helpless to move in the middle of it. So when it turned to spring, in order to prepare for the next winter, they began to collect fire woods."

Whoa-.

And I was told that here, it could pile up until the ankle. But there, the snow would pile up at the level of being completely helpless to move. So, I wonder how far is the mountain, and furthermore, how high is the mountain?

Or rather, if that's the case, then it doesn't look like that we can just say something like, "let's go skiing". Well, I am an indoor person so it's fine either way.

...By the way, Saryuu. You haven't spoken anything ever since your small talk a little while ago. And unexpectedly, the jelly isn't reduced that much. Did something happen? But as I was about to get worried, my little brother timidly opened his mouth.

"...Tou-sama, Kaa-sama."

"What is it, Saryuu?"

"The villa over there, it's close to the Shikino's territory, right?"

"That's right."

So that's it.

Now that I think about it, they are feudal lords of the border territory. So, the mountain is located in that border. Or perhaps I should call it the national border?

Well, it seems to be located deep in the snowy mountain, and roughly it is the boundary to the neighboring country, or so it seems.

But, is that so? A person with the same name as the director is governing it, the border territory.

"...Saryuu, we don't mind if you want to visit your parents' home."

"No, I'm fine, but that's... my big brother is..."

"Big brother? Ah, the person who's going to be the next head of the Shikino family?"

I do not know anything about the person who suddenly came up to the talk, other than the thing I've heard during the conversation.

His age is about the double of Saryuu's, and despite his age, he still remains unmarried. Come to think about it, I wonder what kind of person is he?

"Yes. That big brother of mine, he previously wrote in his letter that he wanted to meet with Nee-sama at least once."

"Bu-!"

No, please wait.

Why me? I threw that question inside my mind.

Let me guess, is it about a marriage meeting to be his partner? Nah, or is it more likely that he's interested to know about the stepsister of his biological brother?

While sloppily thinking about that, Tou-san who's sitting besides me glances slightly with an expression that I can't read whether or not he's thinking about that too, and then answered.

"...Isn't it fine? You should try meeting him."

"Eh? Well, I'm fine with it, so long as it won't gradually become a marriage meeting."

"That won't be the case. I still haven't given you enough affection, after all."

Oyabaka, banzai! (T/N : Long live, doting parents!) But there is no need to say that while exhaling so roughly, Tou-san.

Nah, it's not like I hate it for being loved, though.

Or rather, I'm also interested about what kind of person is Saryuu's biological Onii-san?

Interest, huh.

"By the way, Saryuu."

"Yes?"

The reason behind why the next head of the Shikino family said that he would like to meet me.

I'm certain that it's written in his letter, but let's try to hear it out, anyway.

“Why would your biological Onii-san be interested in me?”

“Ah, that. It might be because I’ve been writing quite a lot about Ane-sama in the letters. About how you’re a good big sister who’s attentive and refreshing.”

“So, it’s because of you-?!”

“B, but I’m not writing anything important!”

“Isn’t it obvious?!”

Good grief. Even so, Saryuu, just how did you describe me in your letters? It couldn’t be... you wouldn’t write compilation of flattery in it, right?

It’s fine to meet him, though, it’s roughly my first time meeting someone from outside. So that the important things that Saryuu didn’t write wouldn’t be exposed, I have to work hard to cover it.

In other words, where I’ve been living up until spring, things like that.

Somehow, I feel strange, like how I want the week of Summer Purification to quickly come, but at the same time I also don’t want it to come.

Chapter 33: The Rattling, Long Journey on the Carriage

On the first day of the Summer Purification Week, we headed to our family villa in the mountain.

Since we will be returning home at the end of the week, so I packed my baggage with the changes of clothes needed. There's supposed to be a bag for it, but for some reason, I'm using a basket woven from a plant vine with a lid instead. It is kinda similar to the ones I saw in the historical dramas. Having a ventilation is good, but I wonder if it's alright to arrange the clothes there?

Well anyway, in a world like this, in order to travel a long distance, we would use carriages. This journey seems to have a distance where you can arrive by the evening if you leave in the morning. ...It's fairly close? This is not a world where there are fast transportations such as Shinkansen and airplanes, after all.

And so.

"...Whoa, it's cool!"

"This is the carriage that your family usually rides in. As for the employees' wagon, we have prepared another one, as well."

"Ah, I see. So that's how it is... thanks for explaining."

The carriage that is led by Yuzuruha-san who stayed behind is, well, its appearance is blackening, or perhaps should I say it feels as if it's lacquering, and metal fittings are used at the key places, and it feels calming to look at. It's cool, and it is sized to fit around 4 people riding. I won't know before I come inside, but it looks like that there will still be a leeway even if all people are sitting face-to-face.

Also, the horse is fairly huge. From what I know, it is around the size of the other world's thoroughbred horse, but perhaps it is one size bigger than them. Overall, the horse looks tough, and all four of its legs are fat.

However, it has a fat beak on its face just like a bird's, and there are small wings on its back.

“What are these wings, Saryuu?”

“Aah. The wild ones have bigger wings, but since it would be a hindrance for the ones who’ll be pulling the carriages, it looks like that they are cut during when the horses are still small.”

“...So that they won’t fly away?”

“Yes. There are also the types that won’t have their wings cut off, for example in cases of the horses used for delivering express mails.”

“Whoa-...”

Wait, is it the kind of monsters that usually appears in games and myths in the other world?

Well, the type in the other world certainly has a head that looks like an eagle, but now, standing right in front of my eyes, no matter how I look at it, it looks more like a crow. When I look at it, I think that this is really a different world.

When I look at the distance, there’s another similar horse pulling another wooden carriage that’s easy to understand. The two of them are standing in a line, and the smaller one seems to be used for the luggage, as it’s steadily being loaded with baskets. Eh, isn’t it just a week? Just how much luggage is being piled up? I only bring a basket, you know?

“Is it really that much? The luggage, I mean.”

“There is also the employees’ luggage. Seiren-sama’s luggage is only one, but is that really alright?”

“In the first place, I don’t use too many things. Even that luggage has been packed with other necessary things by the maids.”

Since it has been a while since I came here, I remember to include cosmetics and other stuffs. I was wondering whether this was enough or not, so I had the maids check them for me.

Because it’s summer, various things such as sunscreen, parasol, a thin cardigan to conceal the skin, other accessories and grooming set are being thrown in, as well.

When I said that, Yuzuruha-san smiled bitterly.

“I see. From now on, it might be better for us to sort out and select only useful things.”

“I think there’s no need to worry about that. Besides, in my case, I was brought up in another world.”

“Even so, it’s also due to our stiff mind.”

I don’t think so, though. In any case, asides in public, I still say “Ore” as usual, and they still continue to watch over me attentively despite that. But I think I should also say “Watashi ”properly even in front of my own parents. But, if I were to do that, somehow I feel like the “Shikino Seiren” will disappear completely from inside of me.

“It’s because Yuzuruha-san and the others having soft minds that I’ve been totally helped. Thank you.”

“If Seiren-sama said so, then I will also continue to work hard.”

Towards Yuzuruha-san who deeply bowed his head, I really felt sorry.

Please don’t overwork yourself.

Before long, the luggage stacking is finally over. Our carriage and the carriage that the employees will be riding on also seem to be ready.

It was my first time seeing a carriage up close, and from my position and my guardian, Yuzuruha-san’s position, we can see my parents and Saryuu who are wearing the noble clothes styled for summer outings. It seems that Kaya-san will come along this time, as she followed my mother, and then headed to the employees’ carriage.

“Seiren, was it fun to look at the horse carriage?”

“Yes. It’s my first time being so close to a horse.”

“Speaking of which, we do not use horses that much at home. The barn is quite distant from the mansion, too.”

It seems that the carriages have come to the mansion several times, but I haven’t seen them because usually, I was studying most of that time.

...That’s it. The me right now, is just like a kid who’s excited to see the lions

and elephants during her first time visiting the zoo.

Well, I won't deny that. After all, it is really fun.

"Then, shall we go now, Nee-sama? There are small horses in the villa, if I'm not mistaken."

"Eh, really?"

To put that in the terms I'm familiar with, it's a pony, huh? So they also exist here.

Because they are small, I wonder if they are at a pettable size? As I thought, it is a bit scary to pet the huge cart-horse.

"Oh my, oh my, please be careful. Saryuu, you approached that horse before and it pecked you, right?"

"T, that's because I have a fodder!"

My younger brother who's being teased by my mother is so adorable.

Or rather, wasn't he being rejected outright by the horse? Also, being "pecked" by the horse, as one would expect from a horse whose head is a bird's, huh.

Anyway, it's a waste of time to talk about it like this, and it'd be better to continue the conversation after we are in the carriage, so everyone is boarding into the carriage. Tou-san is getting in, followed by Kaa-san.

"Now, please go ahead, Ojou-sama."

"Yes, thank you."

I'm vaguely getting used to being called as "Ojou-sama". I took the hand of the coachman who's wearing a beret, and then got into the carriage by using a small stepladder. Since Saryuu is the last to get on, I think that the priority is based on the age, but it might also be an insurance just in case I fall over. I'm sorry for causing you to worry, dear little brother.

Besides that, the interior of the carriage is gorgeous, as expected. There are fine sculptures of plant patterns carved thoroughly on the floor, wallpaper, and even the ceilings, and etc, being rich is awesome, huh. Just how much many

times have I rolled my eyes over this?

We went forward until lunch time, and took a rest in a village en route. There is a big restaurant, and we have our meals and go to the toilet there. In some way, this is not so different from a bus trip.

Well, the shaking is harsher than a bus, and to begin with, the road wasn't paved with asphalt, but it has a stone paving. My back hurts because I've been sitting for quite a long time. For the time being, I'm slightly feeling sick. Ugh.

As one could expect from a village, the toilet is a squat toilet, but it can't be helped. Before going into the toilet, I was given a string, but since I didn't understand its significance, so, Oriza-san who accompanied me to the toilet told me that it was used for rolling up the skirt and tying it together so that it won't get dirty.

"The villa's toilets are the same type as the ones we use at the mansion, so there will be no problem there--"

I smiled bitterly towards Oriza-san who smiled and said that. Nah, wearing a long skirt is very bothersome, huh.

After feeling refreshed and going outside, I breathed in heavily. Oh-, as expected, the air is tastier since we are approaching the mountain. No, in overall, the air in this world is clean, though.

"Ah, Seiren-sama. The horse is coming--"

"Eh?"

"Wrong-, it's up there, up there."

"Ah, whoa!"

Oriza-san pulled me by her hands towards the edge of the road. Immediately afterwards, there was the sound of huge wings coming from up there. And just like that, landing smoothly in the middle of the road with its huge wings, was a pure white horse. Well, its head is still a crow's head, though.

Also, there is a person riding its back. He has a bright light brown hair, and seems to be a middle-aged man who is reasonably older than me, or should I say, a young Onii-san. He wears a thin jacket and pants, and has the image of

the refreshing blue of the summer.

“Please excuse my impoliteness. Are you alright, lady?”

The onii-san who seemed to notice us shortly after his landing, descended from his horse in a panic. After clapping the horse’s nape of the neck once, he quickly approaches us.

Hm? Somehow, his face is familiar. Nah, this is definitely my first time meeting this Onii-san, though.

“Eh, ah, yes.”

“Then I’m glad. I was in a hurry, so I didn’t pay a close attention to my surroundings.”

“Haha. Please be careful next time.”

His troubled expression is somehow familiar, too. Well, I wonder why?

While thinking about that, I heard a loud voice from behind.

“Ane-sama, it’s about time to go-“

“Saryuu-sama?”

“Ah, Saryuu? Sorry, I’ll be there soon.”

Saryuu who was running in a hurry, instantly jumped in his surprise and stopped. Eh, did something happen... nah, wrong.

Perhaps Saryuu stopped because he saw this Onii-san. After all, this is what he said afterwards.

“...Nii-sama.”

“Eh?”

“Mu?”

Me and the onii-san looked at each other. Since he’s calling me “Nee-sama”, then the one he’s calling “Nii-sama” is in other words.

I thought that I had seen him somewhere. Turns out that he is similar to Saryuu.

“...which means, you are Saryuu’s...”

“...So, you are the Shiiya family’s himegimi. Excuse my rudeness.”

The one that I assume to be Saryuu’s big brother, kneeled before me. How should I put it, himegimi?

I heard that we have a little of royal family’s blood, though. Even so, I don’t think that makes me a princess, Onii-san.

“I’m the Shikino family’s eldest son, Taiga. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

“Wa, yes... I’m Seiren. Pleased to meet you.”

It’s my first time meeting him, moreover he’s the first person from outside that I’ve ever met, so I tried my best and lightly picked up my skirt as instructed, and lightly bowed my head. Whoa, I’m so embarrassed. Please just let me greet him normally.

Is it cute if I do it this way? Will the others who look at it think so? I’m so embarrassed now.

“Seiren-sama, welcome. It’s an honor to be able to meet you.”

“Aah, uhm, please don’t be so formal to me. That, I(Ore), no, I (Watashi), am not used to that.”

“Huh?”

I became flustered and requested that, as the person who just told me his name— Taiga-san, stood up straight after bowing his head. Whoa, so tall. He is around two heads taller than my height which shrunk during when I came here. Saryuu who’s 4 years younger than me isn’t much taller than me, but he will also grow up to be this tall, huh?

“Nii-sama, why are you here?”

“Ah. I was told that the people of the Shiiya house will be coming to the villa, so my father instructed me to come and welcome all of you.”

...Shikino Touya, huh.

I wonder why does that name appear every now and then?

Chapter 34: The Odd Long Trip on the Flying Horse

“Well, well. To be welcomed personally by Taiga-dono. I wish we were notified of it in advance.”

“No problem. Because it’s a sudden decision by us, I apologize I couldn’t give a more proper greeting. Since my father was out of the territory to attend to a business, I have come here as the representative.”

“No, no. We should be the one expressing our gratitude because the young lord of Shikino went out of his way to greet us. And we are also planning to go and greet your father directly.”

...Uhm.

Because Taiga-san wanted to meet our parents, we brought him over, and it turned out like this. I wonder why, even when it looks like a normal greeting, I get the feeling like my father is checking out Taiga-san, but is it just my imagination?

“Please do meet him. My father also wanted to have a frank discussion with the head of Shiiya’s family, or so I heard.”

“I’m looking forward to it. Oh right, we’re bringing Shiiya’s pepper as a present. Wouldn’t you want to suppress the sweetness of Shikino’s meat?”

“Oh, I appreciate your thoughts. As for us, we will be offering the wine that we’ve stocked up since last year.”

In other words, the territory of Shikino family is specialized in wine, farm, and dairy products, huh? Since it’s close to the mountain, do they also have lots of goats, I wonder?

However, why does it look like they are glaring at each other? Those two people. Also, Kaa-san, I wish you could stop being so obvious that you have fun watching them... or at least, I think, don’t obviously show that smile.

“Well well, Ane-sama, it’s fine, so... as long as they’re only clashing with words.”

“Saryuu, please don’t tell me such scary things...”

Anyway, together with Taiga-san who picked us up, we headed towards the villa. I am told that our villa seems to be at the outskirts of Shikino family’s territory. The boundary line is quite vague, huh.

Also, for some reason, I’m sitting in front of Taiga-san. In other words, on top of the horse. By the way, because I am wearing a dress, I’m sitting with my legs out to one side, and by doing so, I am clinging to Taiga-san so that I can hold my legs. I want to hide in my embarrassment, and if others see us, we are the perfect depiction of an ikemen older brother and a young girl riding on the white horse together.

“I got a little motion sickness when I was on my way here.”

In the first place, it might happen due to the words I’ve said earlier.

“Forgive my insolence, but if Seiren-sama doesn’t mind, would you like to ride on my horse? From here on, the road will get worse, and I’m worried you might get too sick if you are in the carriage.”

That was what Taiga-san told me.

Tou-san and Kaa-san were reluctant, but considering the condition of my lower abdomen and generally speaking, it was an official offer he made out of a good will, and honestly, I don’t have the confidence that I won’t vomit if the carriage starts to rattle a lot after this. And that was how, well, I received his favor. Since I will be able to breathe in the air outside on top of the horse, isn’t it better?

The other party is a man 10 years older than me, but he is also the next head of the feudal lord family and Saryuu’s big brother, I think he wouldn’t do anything absurd no matter what. For some reason, Saryuu’s eyes were so dreadful, but hey, since when did you become a siscon?

Just to be sure, even if the distance doesn’t seem to be that far, Minoa-san is pulling the horse’s bridle. Since we are going outside, so today, she’s wearing plain clothes, and since it’s summer, she’s wearing mint green short jacket and a skirt as long as her calf, with quite tall heels, but solid short boots. She is a tall person, so these kinds of outfit really suit her.

“I’m sorry. My parents are being too overprotective, so...”

“I heard that Seiren-sama has a frail body. With that kind of situation, it’s natural for your parents to be worried over their daughter.”

When I reflexively bowed my head after riding the horse, Taiga-san shook his head and smiled a bit.

That’s right. For the others, I am the frail daughter who’s been recuperating in the countryside.

Well, it can’t be helped that Tou-san and Kaa-san are excessively worried over me. That’s why, I can only answer with, “Yes”. Nah, I feel that if I were to speak excessively, I may leak something.

Now that I think about it, it’s quite tall when I rode the horse. The horses over here are huge, and I feel like I would seriously fall over if I didn’t cling to Taiga-san.

“It’s alright. I will be sustaining you, so you won’t fall over.”

“If you let Seiren-sama fall over, I won’t forgive you.”

“Understood. I promise you that won’t happen, in the name of Shikino.”

While supporting my back, Taiga-san said that in order to make me feel relieved. And, Minoa-san who’s been watching over me with all her might, dropped the words that were like stabbing the nails, as expected, I guess. Or rather, Minoa-san, your gaze over the shoulder is scary, it’s scary.

The horse that was being pulled over by Minoa-san like that, it’s quite bold, eh. Besides, since I don’t know whether the horse could fly in the sky or not, I was determined to sit still in my position.

However, what is it with assuring that he won’t let me fall over in the name of his family name?

Family name, huh.

“Speaking of which. I have heard that Shikino family are the distant relatives of Shiiya family, but I don’t really know about the details. Could it be that because our villa is in close proximity to the territory, that some minglings happened?”

I got a little bit curious, so I tried asking. After all, today, he even went all the way to pick us up, too.

Well, thinking about it, there's no way we'd be adopting a son of a family with no relation to us at all.

"Yeah. Frankly speaking, my father seemed to be attracted to Maya-sama, but in the end, it seemed that he was defeated by Mondo-sama."

"Oh my."

The cat was unintentionally out of its bag. I tried to hide my panic. As expected, being too honest is quite dangerous.

Returning to the topic, they were love rivals, huh. Now that you mention it, Kaa-san said that her house was close to Shikino-san's house.

...I thought that they were strangers, but turned out their relationships were quite complex. The person with the same name as the orphanage director who raised me, was my biological father's love rival. Hey, think about it.

Or rather, before, when Tou-san seemed to be checking Taiga-san out, did he have Taiga-san's father in his mind? No way.

While thinking about it, Taiga-san examined my facial expression. This is close, too close.

"Is your body doing alright now, Seiren-dono?"

"Ah, yeah. I'm feeling okay."

"Ah, no. That's not what I mean."

Hm, did I get it wrong?

Ah, could it be that he was asking me if it was alright for me to go traveling outside because of my frail constitution?

What a weird thing to be worried over. I feel bad.

"...Yes. Fortunately, I've been able to live my life normally now. Ah, but since I didn't interact much with people, I was poorly informed regarding the circumstances of the family, common knowledge, and social etiquettes. If I was being impolite or bothersome, please properly tell me."

“No. You spent most of your life to recuperate, right? It can’t be helped, and at least I didn’t think of it as a problem or an annoyance.”

If you say so, I feel relieved. It’s not an excuse, because it’s the truth that I am poorly informed of the common knowledge and social etiquettes here.

Nah, I’ve been studying hard at home to learn the common knowledge in this world. Kuon-sense who knew my circumstances, taught me lots of things by making comparisons with the common knowledge in the other world she heard from me.

But, it’s only been 3 months. It can’t be helped if it’s considered as a hasty preparation.

“Seiren-sama. That necklace is quite cute, isn’t it?”

“Eh?”

No well, please don’t suddenly change the topic. It takes time for me to change the topic, as well.

And, by necklace, he means... ah. Today, I am wearing the big ring on my finger, so the one hanging down as the pendant is...

“This small ring is a present that I received from my parents as soon as I was born. It was never been separated from me, and it’s an important amulet for me.”

“Is that so? The ring has been protecting you, huh?”

“Yes.”

At the very least, I have certainly been protected by Tou-san, Kaa-san, and the orphanage director, so I firmly nodded.

And, thankfully, I have arrived around the evening without feeling sick just like that. The villa is small in comparison to the mansion, but it’s a mistake to make the huge two-story to be the comparison target. Because it’s located in the mountain, the villa uses tougher lumbers compared to the mansion’s, and it gives off the vibe of being bulky and heavy. But still, this is the villa, huh? As expected, being rich is amazing.

Ah, in this world, the area where I’m living has the sun properly rising from

the East, passing by the South, and sinking into the West, so I'm saved that I don't have to memorize a different common sense. Or how should I put it, there are lots of shared commonness that it's a bit dubious to say that this is truly a different world. It is on the level where it won't be strange to say that this is the earth in the distant past or even the future.

"Danna-sama, Oku-sama, Saryuu-sama. You have come again this year, as well."

"It's been awhile, Godou. Thank you for always taking care of this villa, this year, we'll be in your care, as well."

"As usual, the greenery and maintenance are perfect. I'm glad we left it in your care, that's what we think every time we come here."

"Thank you for your good words, but I think I'm unworthy of your praises."

"Godou, is it also available this year? The goat cheese?"

"Well, yes. I remember seeing Saryuu-sama eating it delightfully, so I've prepared plenty of it."

The one who welcomed us was an Oji-san who seemed to be the villa's manager. Perhaps he is a bit younger than Tou-san, I think. For some reason, this person gives off the vibe similar to the jewelry merchant, Coda-san. But he is thickly haired, as expected of the bodily adaptation from being in cold area.

He seems to be happily speaking with Tou-san and Saryuu, too, but somehow he looks the happiest when he speaks to Kaa-san. Is it just my imagination, I wonder?

And by '*this year, as well*', it seems like they have been coming here once a year for who knows how many years already. As for me, well, obviously it's my first time coming here.

"And, this is your first time meeting her, right? This is Seiren. She will be coming here starting this year."

"I'm Seiren, nice to meet you. I will be in your care."

"Oh, so you are Miss Seiren. I am Godou, and I've been taking care of Shiiya family's mansion. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

Godou-san who deeply lowered his head, shifted his attention to Taiga-san who's besides me after he raised his face, and looked at him with calculating eyes. For a moment, it seemed as if he squinted his eyes, but I wonder if it wasn't just my imagination?

"Oh my, oh my. Isn't this the young master from the Shikino family? You're coming along, as well?"

"I went to greet the Shiiya family members in my father's stead. If you mind, I will quickly go away."

"Thank you for your consideration. Please be careful on your way home."

Uwaa, there are thorns in his words. It is completely different from when he is talking to me. Anyway, just like that, along with Godou-san's unpleasant atmosphere, we immediately went to the carriages. The maids and the employees are also coming this way, perhaps to take down and carry in the luggage.

The one who slightly sighed was Taiga-san. Eh, his expression turned to be slightly worried face all of a sudden, I wonder did something happen.

"...Taiga-san, did something happen with Godou-san?"

"To be accurate, it was my father. In any case, Godou-dono seemed to have been serving Maya-sama's house. It seems that he has a connection to Mondo-sama."

"Ah-."

So it wasn't just my imagination, from a while ago. So, he was very familiar to my mother because he has been serving her family even before Kaa-san's marriage.

What's more, in short, between Shikino Touya and Tou-san, Godou-san was in Tou-san's faction. So, he wasn't very happy to see the rival's son.

Umm, why are you being so complicated in weird things? Why would the children be dragged into their parent's old love affair, anyway? Give me a break, really.

"Well, I think it's better for Seiren-sama to not be concerned about it. It's

something of the distant past, after all.”

“I think it’s weird to be glared at for something from the distant past like that, am I wrong?”

Ah, the cat is out of the bag, again. Even though I tried to act and speak more properly, I didn’t even notice the words that escaped from my mouth reflexively.

However, Taiga-san who heard my words just now, for a moment, he seemed to be wide-eyed.

“He is, indeed.”

Somehow, he delightfully laughed.

Chapter 35: The Touchy, Villa Conversation

After Taiga-san returned by flying in the sky, we entered the villa. Since Godou-san was also away, I thought to help with unloading the luggage, but I was stopped by Oriza-san.

“This is the job for us, the servants-. If we let our master’s family member help us, we would think that we are incompetent-. Your good intention alone is more than enough, okay?”

...But. In short, it seems like it will be a bad reputation if we were to help them out.

Well, I hate to deprecate everyone who has been kind to me, so I went inside while saying sorry in my mind. Or rather, everyone here is really hardworking, that I feel guilty.

Oriza-san and Minoa-san tidied up my luggage, while Kanna-san was glancing here and there for some time ago, but perhaps she was in the middle of tidying up Saryuu’s luggage, as well. In the end, when I walked towards the door on top of the wooden stairs, the one who opened it was Godou-san who just returned.

“I ought to guide and lead you here. Then, please come on here.”

“Yes. Excuse me.”

Since somehow my parents and Saryuu hadn’t entered, I became the one who entered in first. The door was also made of woods, and the thickness was amazing. As expected, since the winter is cold, it is designed as a protection against cold, I think.

“...whoa.”

“How do you think about it?”

The moment when we entered inside, I thoughtlessly raised my voice. Godou-san’s voice when he asked me about it sounded quite boastful, but it was pretty much bragging.

The interior which was cleaned up thoroughly, felt comparatively like a log-

house. The plain wood wall and ceiling wrapped up the room, and the floor was as expected, made of woods. Besides that, a flower-patterned carpet was laid out on top of it, a simpler one compared to the one in the mansion. Ah, in the deeper place, there was a big hearth.

Also, perhaps due to being made mainly out of woods, it also smelled of woods in peculiar. Aah, it felt like the smell was blended with the air inside the room.

Compared to the mansion which was largely made up of stones, I feel more affinity to this villa. Since I was brought up in such a world, something like that.

“It’s a good house. The smell of the wood feels so affectionate, ...I like it.”

This is bad, I almost said *ore* instead of *watashi*. Safe, safe.

Godou-san who heard my answer, and my family who was besides me before I even noticed, all of them seemed extremely happy. ...Could it be that they wanted me to be delighted?

Ah, did I smile properly? I didn’t have a stiff expression before, right?

“If you say that you like it here, this villa will also be delighted. Ah, Seiren-jousama’s room is in the inner part of the second floor.”

Un, it seems to be okay.

Even then, for a moment, I noticed that Godou-san’s manner of speech was similar to the other world’s. That the villa would also be delighted, I think not many people in this world would say something like that. Perhaps, their way of thinking is different, though.

Anyway, the inner part of the second floor, huh?

“Thank you very much. If it’s the second floor, the view from there seems to be good.”

“Yes, of course. After all, we thought that it’d be great if you could make great memories during your first stay here. Now then, I shall show you the way.”

We headed towards another stairs that was in the further side slightly ahead of the entrance, and Godou-san lent me a hand. Then, Saryuu hurriedly followed and stepped next to me.

“Ah, since I will be in the room next door, let’s go together. Tou-sama and Kaa-sama’s room is located in the inner part of the first floor, right?”

“Yes. Saryuu, please accompany Seiren.”

“Don’t be overly excited just yet. After all, it will take quite a long trip to get there.”

“Ye~s!”

Eh, then the second floor will be used by me and Saryuu, huh. Is that okay, I wonder... But well, if Saryuu says so, then I guess it’s the custom here.

The stairs were finely made of woods too, and when we stepped on them, they gave off the typical sound as we passed through it.

Going up towards the second floor, what lies in front of us seems to be our rooms, while there is a corridor behind us... huh, the dining room is there? Perhaps, it is just right above the entry hall, I think.

“Ah, the scenery here is really good. Also, the dining room of this house is in the top floor.”

“Which means, the kitchen is further inside here?”

Because Godou-san informed me of it, I became curious of the dining room and tried to take a peek of it a bit. Un, there is also the warm feeling because the room was fully made of the woods, and overall, I prefer it. The furniture is as expected, no matter how you look at it, they seem to be expensive that only the rich people can obtain them.

“To be more precise, we have made it a little lower after considering the luggage being loaded.”

“So it has the feeling like a middle second floor, huh. Then, wouldn’t it be quite a hassle to carry the meals?”

“For such a matter, we have wagons.”

Well, so that’s how it is. Since there won’t be something like lifts in the other world, if there were no wagon, we don’t have any choice but to carry them by our hands.

Or rather, since the scenery is good, the dining room is on the top floor, and since it might be difficult to bring in the ingredients, the kitchen was made in the middle second floor, huh. Our ancestors had thought of interesting things, eh.

While thinking about it, Saryuu shifted his attention towards me with a wondering expression.

“Nee-sama, you asked a lot of things, huh?”

“Oh well, there are lots of things that I don’t know. Don’t you also get curious, Saryuu?”

“Eh... Aah, I haven’t really thought about them. I see, Ane-sama is a studious person, so of course you would like to know about various subjects.”

...It’s as Saryuu said, I guess.

I still don’t know much about this world, so I have become used to asking about things that piqued my interest. There is a saying from the other world, [to ask is but a moment’s shame, but not to ask is a lifetime’s shame, but in the end, I do want to know about various things.

After all, I have to live in this world from now on. As Shiiya Seiren.

“Saryuu-sama. If you follow your big sister’s example, you would be able to become a good feudal lord in the future.”

“I, I will try my best!”

Godou-san said that, and my little brother then strongly clutched his fists.

See, Saryuu is brimming with his intention to succeed as the heir of the family and is doing his best. Kaya-san, I think there’s no need for you to be worried. Really.

“Whoa, amazing~!”

Inside my room, or rather, at the window further inside—it was the first words I uttered when I saw what was over there.

Nah, the window itself isn’t that big, though. Precisely beyond the window, there seems to be meadows at the hill.

The spacious greenery, the mountains that can be seen in the distance, and then the beautiful sky. Since the sun is setting, the reddish light is shining from the side, but that's what made it look amazing.

Uwaa, I'm glad I came here.

Both Saryuu and Godou-san seemed to be happy to hear my reaction. Uhm, they seem to be really paying attention to my feelings. Especially Godou-san who actually didn't even know me until just recently.

Yeah, I have to be very careful so that it won't bring about questions regarding my circumstances during my stay. Although it is summer, the area around here seems to be more refreshing.

Then, I suddenly remembered.

"Ah, that's right. During the winter, the snow will be piling up a lot, right?"

"Yeah. That's why at the beginning of the winter, I usually do a major cleanup, and then the villa will be closed after that. It is quite a harsh environment to be living all alone by yourself."

"Eh, all alone?"

"I have to bid my farewell to my wife quite early. Danna-sama then was willing to appoint me as this house's manager comfortably."

"Is that so. Uhm, I'm sorry for my impoliteness to ask such a sensitive question."

Ah-, I heard something unexpected.

In a panic, I bowed my head, but Godou-san laughed and said, "Please don't mind it." Perhaps he has gotten over it, I think.

Someday, I will have to get over the other world, or else, it won't be good. Yeah.

"Then, I will be preparing for dinner. I will call you when it's dinner time, so until then, please take a rest."

"Yes, thank you very much."

"Yeah, thanks. We'll be looking forward to it."

After bowing down very deeply, Godou-san cheerfully went down through the stairs. After this, will he be carrying in the ingredients? I feel like they have prepared them in advance, but could it be that we brought something from our mansion? Take the pepper that Tou-san gave to Taiga-san, for example.

“Ane-sama. Godou’s cooking is a bit different than our house’s cooking, but it’s also delicious.”

“I see. As expected, the cooking depends on where you live, huh.”

Well, that is right. This is the territory managed by Shikino-san, and looks like the things produced here are delicately different from our territory.

Since we are in the middle of the mountains, I wonder if there will be freshwater fishes? I like the landlocked masu salmon and the sweetfish that the orphanage director occasionally managed to fish.

While the face of the director comes up to my mind for a while, suddenly Saryuu’s face approached me. Hey, this little brother of mine, is it fun to take a close-up look at your sister?

“...by the way, Nee-sama.”

“Eh, what is it?”

“It’s about Taiga-niisama, but... what do you think of him, Nee-sama?”

“Ha?”

Saryuu abruptly asked me such a thing. What do I think, so he asked.

He seems to be kind, but I can’t see his true motive... I understand that there’s no way it’s the answer he expected to hear.

In this case, my answer should be something like this, maybe.

“...Ummm. He is good as a friend, I think. He seems to be remarkable and hardworking, and he seems to be a great person.”

“No, that’s not what I mean.”

“If that’s not what you mean, then what is it?”

Nah, there is no point in asking.

If it's not about how he is as a friend, as I am his big *sister*, there is only one meaning, and that is, to ask about my opinion on him as a person of opposite gender.

Uwaa, what a pain.

"Could it be, are you curious whether I'm being attracted by him at first sight or things like that?"

"Eh, ah, uhm..."

See, bingo. Or, how should I put it, Saryuu, why are you turning bright red until your ears? I am simply just your elder sister. Although I feel like an elder brother in the inside.

"Anyway, I'm not falling in love at first sight with him, let's just say that I don't feel any affection towards him for now. That's it for my case."

I can't help but flatly answer him like that. To be honest, I don't know how to look at Saryuu who felt relieved as he stroked his chest and said, "Hoo...".

In the first place, why would I be worried about being my little brother's subject of romance?

Nah, even so, he is not my real younger brother. But then, Saryuu, you are real brothers with Taiga-san, so... huh.

Could it be that I have become the cause of the two brothers' competition? No, no matter how you look at it, I think I don't have that any kind of bad fetishes at all. Yeah.

Or rather, for me right now, Saryuu is only my younger brother, while Taiga-san is just an acquaintance that I made unexpectedly.

Be as it may, I don't think the two of them would just give up even if I clearly told them that. Or more precisely, the two of them seem to be the stubborn type.

...Somehow, I was worn out in various meaning.

Change 36: The Heartwarming, Villa Night Chat

“So tired-“

When I got back to my room, I jumped straight towards the bed, and proceeded to lie face-down, with my body forming the letter 大. Not only is my body tired, but my mental, too, since I just had an awkward conversation with Saryuu.

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“Seiren-samaa. I understand your feelings, but your manner is bad.”

“Nah, I know that. That is why I'm doing this in where people can't see me.”

“We don't know that for sure, people might see you. Please be more careful.”

“O-kay!”

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It seems that the luggage carrying activities outside have ended, and so I was rebuked by both Oriza-san who's putting the clothes inside the dresser and Minoa-san who's tidying up the accessories. Nah well, I will be careful if I am outside, though.

By the way, before I even noticed it, the two of them have changed into their usual uniforms. No, really, I didn't even notice it.

I feel like they were wearing plain clothes during when I saw them unloading the luggage. I think that they are awesome for being able to change their clothes that quickly, but I wonder if it's the kind of things that you will become

skilled in at some time?

“...But, even still.”

When I was rolling over on the bed, I heard the sound of something hitting, so I hurriedly got up. Ah, I shouldn't be wearing my shoes while rolling over on top of the bed, really. I hurriedly took my shoes off and properly put it behind. Nah, I think it's more like tossing it off.

And, this time I am facing up. There is also a canopy here but it's simple, and the unbleached cloth matches with the wooden house, giving it a gentle feeling.

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“As expected, I feel calmer with a room around this size.”

As one might expect, as this villa is overall smaller than the mansion, naturally, my room is also smaller here. Or rather, this one room here. Nah, that is what I usually do.

(T/N: saying that this room is her room even if she's only staying there temporarily).

The room's size itself is quite small, approximately around 10-jo, I think. Since there is no tatami here, we generally measure the size by eyes, though.

But, I have been living in the same-sized room. When I was still in the institution, together with the children who were taken in the same way.

“Similar to the room where you lived in before, huh?”

“Yup. Although over there, a room around this size is used for around 4-5 people to sleep in.”

“...What?”

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I omitted a lot of parts and answered just like that, causing the other two to be completely stunned. It can't be helped, I really did grow up in that kind of environment.

Fu-, I hurriedly brought my decreasing consciousness back. Whoa, I really am exhausted, huh.

"Seiren-sama, I have brought the hot water in."

"N, thank you, Minoa-san."

Don't steal my content, desu >_<

I thought that my consciousness was decreasing only for an instant, but could it be that several minutes have passed, I wonder. Before I even noticed it, Minoa-san has gone outside and brought in a towel and a bucket of hot water. Oriza-san has also given me a change of clothes. As expected, did I just fall asleep for a moment?

I wiped my own face and I had my hands and feet being wiped. Oh-, it feels good to have my feet being warmed. After that, I also washed my face with the cold water, but I have already woken up, unexpectedly.

"I think it's dinner time soon, will it be alright?"

"Ah, yup. It's fine, I think."

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I wore the new change of underwear and I also changed my clothes. I am wearing a simple three-quarter sleeves dress that has white laces on top of the pale pink cloth. I also replaced my shoes with the soft one for indoor use.

I had my hair being brushed by Oriza-san, and I can say that this kind of thing is somewhat fun.

"Please be careful. It will be bad if your face gets plunged into the soup, you know?"

“I won’t do that, I won’t.”

Well, I am now fully awake after wiping my face, so I think it will be alright. ... anyway, why did you say that kind of thing, though?

“...Or rather, did anyone actually do that?”

“Tehee, it’s actually me-“

“So, it’s you yourself!”

I reflexively snapped the back of my hand and thrust it. Oriza-san smoothly dodged it and continued to brush my hair. Because my hair has become slightly longer, it feels like it’s lightly being weaved within.

But still, Oriza-san has ever dozed off during a meal, huh. That is—well, all of the servants must be feeling more exhausted compared to us. It won’t be that weird for something like that to ever happen, then.

“Seiren-sama, Saryuu-sama, the meal’s ready.”

“Ah, yes. I’m coming.”

By the time my preparation is done, Godou-san’s voice can be heard. It’s time for a meal, I’ve been looking forward to it.

I didn’t notice it, but truthfully, I’m feeling hungry.

Of course, I think the other servants are feeling even hungrier.

“Yosh, shall we go?”

“Ya-y!”

“Yes.”

As I expected, Oriza-san and Minoa-san answered me very happily.

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“I give my thanks to the God of the Sun and also to the season. Itadakimasu

(let's eat)."

So, it's dinner time. Godou-san's boasted cooking is all being lined up on top of the dining table, and overall they look simple, so I feel a little bit relieved.

There is a cream soup full of vegetables, salt and pepper-seasoned fried chicken meat, and warm vegetables salad. Also, there is a freshwater fish being wholly covered in meuniere. The pastries are looking crispier than the ones that we usually eat.

Yeah, it seems like I prefer this family-oriented style more. Shiiya chefs' cookings are also tasty though, which I'm grateful for everyday. Also, perhaps my mother also prefers the taste of the cookings like this.

"Ane-sama. This cheese is tasty."

As he was tasting the cheese which is included in the salad, Saryuu made a really delighted expression. Come to think about it, I think he has also said it before.

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"Ah, could it be Saryuu's favorite, goat's cheese?"

"Yes. Saryuu-sama unexpectedly likes it so much, that the first time he ate it, he overate it and stayed in the bed for the whole day."

"Godou, what are you saying?!"

I can't help but make a wry smile towards Saryuu whose face turned red because of his anger.

Or should I say, how did you eat the cheese that made you overeat and stayed in the bed for such a long time, dear little brother? I don't know in what form it was made, but wouldn't it be suffice to say that he ate everything?

"Nn, ah, it's really tasty."

When I tried to eat the cheese alone, it tasted a bit too strong and peculiar.

Aah, that is why it came along with the salad. I think it's a perfect substitute for dressing, yup.

"Ooh, it suits young miss' liking, huh. That is good, then."

"Oh my. Don't eat too much, okay, Seiren?"

"Yes, I will be careful."

When I answered to Kaa-san's frivolous talk, I saw Saryuu who's besides me, sinking in depression. Once you made a stupid blunder, it will be talked again forever. *Do your best-*, I cheered for him, although I only said that in my mind.

After the meal, both of my parents quickly returned to their room. I thought that they were going to sleep early, but turns out I was wrong.

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"In a villa like this, the number of the employees are fewer, so they will be able to be intimate without paying a lot of attention towards the surrounding."

The one who informed me about it was Godou-san.

Ah, in other words, they are going to make out huh, that husband and wife. Even though their daughter is already this big, they are still fine with being so intimate. Especially since there seemed to be something like a competition before getting mother's hand in marriage.

Their room is in the inner side of the first floor, in other words, it is not close to the dining room which is located in the second floor, and the sound of the servants working won't reach their room. ...wait, it's wrong, it should be the opposite huh, the opposite. Their voice during the making out session won't be heard by the other party who will be doing their job.

...But, even with that, it wasn't easy for them to conceive a child, it seems. And when I was finally born, I disappeared to somewhere else only after one month.

After that, there was a high possibility that they tried hard to conceive again, but still they couldn't, so in the end, they adopted Saryuu.

It was terrible, I guess.

Well, with that being said, Saryuu and I will also return to our rooms early. But my younger brother is still caving in the cheese. He is unexpectedly being quite childish, huh. Well, I will leave that up to Kanna-san and the others.

"Seiren-sama, the sky is magnificent. Will you take a look at it?"

"Hm?"

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Minoa-san turned to look at me after she closed the louver door. By the sky, she means the night sky, huh? We have been going through a lot of troubles to arrive here, so shall I try to have a look at it?

I stood up from the sofa and approached Minoa-san who is next to the window, and gazed outside.

"...Whoaa..."

The stars are astonishingly sparking in the absurdly deep night sky. Or rather, the night sky is really dark here. It's obvious, though.

Ever since I came to this world, frankly there weren't a lot of chances to gaze at the night sky. Perhaps as a way to prevent crime, or so I thought, the louver door is always closed early. Even so, I have ever looked at it several times, and thought that it was amazing to have such a large amount of stars.

"It was also staggeringly amazing during when I gazed at it at the mansion, but the view here is more amazing, huh?"

"It's because the air is cleaner here."

"...The mansion's air is also cleaner than the place I was living before, though."

I spontaneously responded. Yup, since it's a different world, there are lots of things to be compared. Since there are no big factories like there were in the other world, I think that both the road and the sky are completely clean.

But, even in this kind of world, there is such thing as the air getting polluted, huh?

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"Is that so? The air around the mansion is more polluted than here, though, because there is the smoke from various works and cookings."

"Ah-, I see."

I see. So even if there are no big machines here, there is still the smoke produced from fire in general, huh. Since there is a hearth, there will also be the smoke from smoked food. I also heard that there is some gases being produced when you are making compost, but the air is more polluted in the cities more than in the countrysides.

Well, I think I seriously made an error in the target of comparison. Really, me.

"In the place where I was living, the smoke produced from work operation was quite a lot. Although people have paid more attention to it lately."

"Uwaa, that is terrible."

"Also, people are reading this chapter in another aggregator site that stole the translator's hard work without even asking for their permission. Plus, they made money from it."

"What? But why would they do that?"

"Because they just don't care about the translators. Perhaps the translators should consider retiring since nobody shows their support to them, anyway."

“I see... well, translating sure takes quite a time, plus this series is quite long. Kinda true they will be burnt out without any readers showing up and commenting in their own site.”

...I think so, too. It's a lot more convenient in the other world, but there are lots of terrible things happening because of it, too.

I wish that the world over here will always stay this way.

Change 37: The Surprising, Villa Morning Talk

I suddenly found myself waking up. It's still dark, but somehow the air feels refreshing, huh... when I think about it, I managed to remember. That's right, I have arrived at the villa. Because it is much closer to the mountains than the mansion, I become able to spend the morning easily although it is a summer morning.

“Excuse me. Are you awake, Seiren-sama?”

A knock which sounds softer than the one I'm used to hear during the time in the mansion can be heard. Ah, did she come to wake me up?

“I'm awake-,” I raised my voice while trying to get up, and coincidentally, the door opened and my eyes met with Minoa-san who just came in.

Suddenly, she showed a sharp kitchen knife and pointed it at my neck.

“This is your punishment for reading this on another site. You should have read it in the original site of the translator who's worked hard to bring you this chapter to show your love and support.”

“Good morning, Seiren-sama.”

“...N, morning.”

“It's about the right time for you to prepare and dress up before having a breakfast. I'm saved since you're already awake.”

I could sense that Minoa-san smiled a tricky smile from the expression of her eyes. Could it be that she's trying to tell me that I should be awake earlier?

Well, there are still a lot of things needed to be done although it's still

morning. From washing my face, changing my clothes, brushing my hair, and then applying some make-ups, then going to the toilet afterwards, and then it's already time to eat breakfast.

Nah, applying the make-ups were excluded from my routine in the other world, and that's why I become confused about it now. After all, I was a man in the other world, so I didn't really pay a lot of attention to my personal appearance.

"Good morning. I'm bringing in the hot water-"

"Morning, Oriza-san."

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The door opened, and Oriza-san brought over the hot water and towel. Ah-, it will mostly be the maids' jobs to do them, so I can be quite easygoing about it, huh?

"It's another fine weather today-"

Oriza-san put the bucket containing the hot water on the bedside, and quickly went to open the louver door. Then, I washed my face and felt completely awake.

When the louver door opened and the bright light entered the window, she suddenly stiffened her body. Minoa-san looked outside with a puzzled expression, and the next moment, she seized and raised the basket that was besides the window with one hand. She then strongly swung it... wait, the white thing that I saw out of the window, isn't that Taiga-san's horse?!

"Wai-! Minoa-san, stoppp!"

"...!"

Some way or another, Minoa-san stopped at my command. I stood up from the bed in a hurry, made my way through the bedside and headed quickly

towards the window. Oriza-san's body was stiffened for a while, but once she realized what was going on, she yelled, "But why-?!" Well, I understand her feelings.

Anyway, outside the window, there really is Taiga-san's white horse, but with the crow's head. In addition, it isn't just his horse, but there's properly a person riding on its back.

"Yo! Good morning, Seiren-sama."

".....Good morning, Taiga-san."

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I think that perhaps my face is twitching, but still, I don't intend to hide it. Or rather, it's good that he wasn't hit by Minoa-san's basket and fell down, maybe, so I slightly thought.

"Uhm, Seiren-sama, Taiga-sama. Are you really in the situation where you can exchange greetings carelessly?"

"Isn't that fine? At the very least, he doesn't seem to be coming over here to attack or creep into my bedroom sneakily."

As expected, Oriza-san's face becomes stiff at the comment that was retorted earlier. Nah well, no matter how you look at it, Taiga-san doesn't seem to be carrying any weapon, and in the first place, since he came here by such a gaudy horse, he would be found out right away after we spotted it.

"Please be at ease, Seiren-sama. This villa is being covered by a strong protective wall. I dare say that Taiga-sama won't be able to approach us from that position."

"Despite that, you were about to throw a basket at him reflexively, Minoa-san?"

"...I really am sorry about that."

I was slightly amazed at Minoa-san's words. Or more precisely, by the strong protective wall, which is a barrier, huh? Is this villa a secret hideout or something like that?

...Or could it be that since I have ever disappeared, the security's been made stricter?

If that is the case, then the same thing would be put up even in the mansion, and yet, as soon as night falls, the louver doors would be tightly shut and the guards are placed early.

Perhaps, the one who created the protective walls was Jigen-san, I wonder?

Well, let's not think too deeply about that thing first. To put it simply, the security is quite strict, yes.

First, let's deal with the next feudal lord who's smiling on top of his horse, in the middle of the sky, right in front of my eyes.

"So, what are you doing this early in the morning?"

"Actually, I am on my way to visit a grave."

Taiga-san answered my question quickly, stating it as something natural.

Visiting a grave, huh. Well, since it's currently Obon (Festival of the Dead), so it's quite a natural thing to do, but that's not it. Instead of quickly showing your face to the ancestors, why are you looking at the room of a woman that you just met yesterday? I am a man inside, though.

I unintentionally stared at him with scornful eyes. Taiga-san just lightly shrugged his shoulders, and continued his words.

"I just wanted to see Seiren-sama's face, although I may say that it's rude of me to come here in this sort of method."

.....

There won't be anyone who's gonna blame me for getting my hands too attached to the window frame reflexively, right?

My shoulder was being touched by what could possibly be Oriza-san's hand, but for some reason I felt that it was quite lukewarm, perhaps it was just my

imagination, though.

“Taiga-sama. It’s not a praiseworthy thing to peek at the room of a feudal lord’s daughter like that.”

“I did not mean to peek in. But if my action seemed to be like that as a result, I deeply apologize.”

As usual, Minoa-san’s words are harsh, but it seems to be a fair argument.

Since he is still a rich ikemen onii-chan who’s riding a flying horse, so it’s still tolerable in some way or another. In this case, if I was brought up as a normal girl, I wonder what would I think about this?

Ah, there is no way of knowing even if I think about it, so let’s stop. For the time being, I should be more cautious.

“Even if you didn’t intend to do so, we can only conclude that you’re peeping, and in the first place... I’m still in my pajamas. Please give me a break.”

“That is certainly true. Please forgive my thoughtlessness.”

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I think that his refined bow is really cool, even from my point of view. However, only if he’s apologizing not for the fact that he’s peeping.

“Well then, please excuse me. Next time, I will come to meet you from the front, fair and square.”

Taiga-san flew just like that, leaving a very refreshing smile just like the morning’s air. Ah, this should be approximately where I should wave my hand and say, “Take care.”

Uh unh, is an ordinary girl, no, a rich daughter, supposed to be that delicate?

Oh well, I understand the feelings that men want to look cool, but when he did that, it caused me who watched from his side to feel the cold air. I had better tell him, but I need to be careful in choosing my words.

But, for the time being, there is only one thing that I want to utter from my mouth.

“...What was that, just now?”

“I don’t understand.”

Minoa-san answered shortly. Those girls also don’t have any single clue on what’s happening, how do you expect me to understand?

Nah, perhaps by some chance, I might be able to understand it. But this one, I don’t understand it after all.

“Really, didn’t he come just to see Seiren-sama’s face?”

In the middle of the conversation, Oriza-san’s optimistic conjecture popped out, but I can’t help but to perfectly deny it.

Nah, but actually, he’s giving the feeling like he’s got nothing else in mind besides that.

“Seiren-sama, you’re popular, huh-“

“Well, since he’s the next head of the Shikino family, so he’s perfect as a partner.”

“...Ah-, that kind of thing? Could it be...”

As I expected, I can understand Oriza-san and Minoa-san’s lines.

Although I didn’t fall in love at first sight with him, but it’s quite likely that Taiga-san was charmed with me.

I see, that person is still single despite his age, that’s because he doesn’t have good eyes for women, huh.

No, I think he’s relatively a good person as a friend. I still feel like a man inside, so honestly I can’t imagine being in a love affair with a male partner. Well, even when I was a man, I didn’t even know about girls, too.

“Or how should I put it, let me think for a while. From the way he’s pushing forward, women wouldn’t think that as a sweet move...”

There seem to be some reasons as to why Taiga-san is still single. Aside from the thing concerning the house, of course.

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During breakfast, I talked about Taiga-san with my family and Godou-san. Unexpectedly, Saryuu who's in the room next to me didn't even notice it happening. You, could it be that you still slip out of your room to do independence training early in the morning?

"Bu-! **cough cough** ...Ta, Taiga-dono did that?"

"Oh my. It's good that he inherited his father's assertiveness, but he should have thought more about the right time and place, right?"

Tou-san seemed to choke on the water lightly, and coughed violently. By the next time our faces met, for some reason, I don't know how to react.

Kaa-san is simply being amazed. Eh, Taiga-san inherited it from his father? Which means, Kaa-san had possibly received that sort of attacks as well, huh..... well, that is not something she could have chosen, though. It's no good, the Shikino family. Saryuu was originally from there, so I wonder if he would be alright. I am worried as his older sister.

"Fu-mu. Taiga-sama said that he was going to visit the grave, right?"

Said Godou-san while slightly thinking. Ah, since this villa is close to Shikino's territory, he would understand the circumstances, I guess.

"Shikino family's graveyard is still further inside the mountains from here, so it's not weird for him to be leaving his house early, but did he purposely make a stopover here? It's the first time I heard about this kind of thing happening."

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...So there is no previous example, huh.

Which means, it's quite serious? Nah, even if he is not being serious, I'm still troubled. About many things, there are just lots of things that I need to think about.

Mainly, regarding the current head of the Shikino family. Ah-well-, it's quite bothersome that I need to think about his house and family before thinking about the concerned person himself. Not to mention that Taiga-san doesn't seem to be a bad person.

"In the middle of his way to visit the grave, he purposely made a short visit just to see Ane-sama's face, huh? Nii-sama..."

Yup. But well, even when he is not a bad person, still, for having that kind of big brother, I understand your feeling that you're greatly perplexed as his biological younger brother, Saryuu. Or more precisely, if I were to have that kind of biological big brother, of course I'd also be greatly perplexed, and even if I am not Minoa-san, I would still want to throw a basket at him.

Change 38: The Peaceful, Small Horse Ranch

Now then.

Today, Saryuu and I would be going to a nearby farm. At any rate, Godou-san went on before us to do some shopping, in other words, it seems like he's going to the source of Saryuu's favorite goat cheese.

Nah, I thought that we would be going to the ancestors' grave first.

Nah, you should probably visit the translator's original site and show some appreciation, dude, even if you are just a leecher. The translator would be happy to see your thanks.

"Is it okay to visit the grave tomorrow?"

"Shiia's graveyard is close to Shikino's graveyard. If we were to go right now, the probability that we would meet Taiga-sama is quite high."

"Let's do it tomorrow!"

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And that is how we would be going to greet our ancestors tomorrow. Godou-san, thank you. Really, to be honest, I don't know how I could face the person who just showed his face like that this morning.

Minoa-san and Oriza-san are also coming with me. Saryuu-san is going with Kanna-san and the ponytailed maid-san with round glasses that I saw before. If I'm not wrong, she is called Maki-san.

Anyway, the one who's leading us around is Kuon-sensei who came shrewdly. Jigen-san seems to be staying behind at the mansion, so during the time when Kuon-sensei was gone, the other employees who stayed behind would be taking care of him.

"In other words, My Lord, and Madame. I will be looking after Seiren-sama and Saryuu-sama."

"Well, we'll be relying on you."

"The two of you, and the maids, too, let's have fun!"

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It seems like my parents would be staying at the villa. Or perhaps I should say, no matter how you look at it, they are brimming with the spirit to be lovey dovey at broad daylight.

They're crossing their arms intimately, well... nah, I have no problem with my parents being on good terms with each other. I may have been raised at the institution without any parents, but there were other kids growing up together with me whose parents were on a really bad terms and so they lost their place

in the family.

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"Well then, we'll be going."

"See you later."

After exchanging greetings, we went to get on to the small carriage. Today's carriage is dyed elegantly in red, and surprisingly it doesn't feel very out of place compared with the background scenery it's in. I've already gotten used to the horse that has the face of a crow. As usual, the maids are riding another carriage, but only Kuon-sensei's riding on the same carriage as us, acting as our guardian.

A little while after the carriage began to move, Kuon-sensei smiled and opened the conversation.

"Seiren-sama, Saryuu-sama. I have heard the rumors regarding Taiga-sama."

"Uwa, you've heard of it?"

"...hahaha... Nii-sama is already..."

"Dead. As dead as your conscience and kindness :("

I reflexively shifted my eyes towards the ceilings, while Saryuu dejectedly put his hands on his head. Nah, it's an obvious reaction.

Kuon-sensei seemed to be looking at me and Saryuu interchangingly, and then fixed her sight on me.

"I have nothing else to say regarding this matter. I think it's better for Seiren-sama to do as you will."

"...ah, yeah. Please let me think... for a moment."

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Ah, I believe this all perfectly about how Taiga-san fell for me. The rest would depend on me, huh.

It was something that I expected to hear.

But to be frank, I don't know exactly what Taiga-san thinks about me.

"Oh well, even if you told me that clearly, it's not something easy to think about."

"That is exactly why I want Nii-sama to do his best if he really wants to get a wife."

I vacantly murmured, while Saryuu answered with a voice that seemed as if he wanted to cry, still holding his head.

Oi, did you think that he wasn't getting serious in his age? Isn't it pretty much settled that we don't really know what he's thinking about, for still remaining unmarried at his age?

Or perhaps I should say that there are times when he tried to show off. With that kind of suggestive behavior, wouldn't it be the same as declaring his feelings to the other party? And I can't help but to think of it as a matter of fact.

"Well, I think it would be good if he's a bit more assertive."

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Kuon-sensei shrugged her shoulders, and her words really spoke for my frank opinion, as well.

The farm that we arrived at was located in a grass-covered plain with a gently sloping inclination compared to the villa's vicinity. Well, since the farm is raising horses and goats, it would be better if it's full of grass. The air also feels nice

here.

Perhaps related to the wind's direction, although the farm is located deeper than the villa, the snow doesn't really pile up. However, once winter comes, it looks like the snow would raise until it covers one's foot.

"As the goats are in their pasturage moment during winter, they usually take the horses to descend downward."

It seems that what Kuon-sensei said is true. The horses being kept here seem small in size, but even still, it will still be quite difficult to take them along for transfer.

The owner of the farm who came to welcome us was an old man with a good body build. He is growing both his moustache and beard, and he wears a shirt seemed to be of denim cloth, with it being rolled up to his arms. He seems to resemble Godou-san?

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"It's been a while, Gadou."

"Oh, Seiren-sama. Kuon-sama is coming along, too."

"Long time no see, Gadou-san."

Gadou, eh? Even his name is so close.

So, where is the other army, like, Gidou, Gudou, Gedou? Lol joke aside, hi, this is the translator. If you can read this line—welp, you are definitely reading this somewhere else. My site won't have this line visible.

"Yeah, since Seiren-sama is also coming along this year. Seiren-sama, this is the farm's owner, Gadou-san. He is Godou-san's big brother."

Ah, as expected. It is easy to understand in a sense.

For siblings to have similar names. Saryuu and Taiga are very different, but... come to think about it, those two's father, if I'm not wrong, he should have a

little brother with a similar name. Touka-san, was it?

“Oh my. Seiren-ojousama, have your body’s condition gotten better? If that’s the case, then it’s good.”

“Thank you very much. Pleased to meet you, I’m Seiren. Please treat me well.”

Well, setting aside the matter of Shikino family, I gave my greetings to Gadou-san. Today, let’s forget about the Shikino family. Yup.

The first area that was introduced to us was the area where small horses ran around. There were fences standing properly, and inside it, at the back of the horses who were running around, there were small wings flapping around. Ah-, it would be impossible for them to fly with those wings.

“Over here, we have a species of horse that’s small in size.”

“They are small, indeed.”

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When I approached the area, instead of a big crow head, they have faces resembling sparrows. They are around the same size as the deers who are walking around Nara and Hiroshima cities as if they owned the place. Taiga-san’s horse looks bigger compared to normal horses, but when they’re small like this, they look cute. Perhaps I was wrong to compare them, though.

[T/N: Sorry I can’t keep my tsukkomi

. Seiren, didn’t you say that you want to forget about the Shikino family for today? Even if you’re thinking about his horse, but by doing so, you’re also thinking about the person himself XD]

“Aren’t they cute, Ane-sama?”

“Yeah. By the way, Saryuu, wouldn’t it be fine to take a closer look at them?”

“Eh, ah... I’m fine, Nee-sama can go on ahead.”

I am right by the fence, but Saryuu is quite far away from my location. Incidentally, he is using Kuon-sensei as a shield, but hey, Saryuu, are you really okay?

Now that I think about it, wasn’t I told that he was pecked by the horses before? It seems like he has developed a trauma at the same level as being bitten by a dog.

“Come here-“

“Come to Convallaria’s Library~! Read the translations directly there, oh, and read my original novels, too!”

Well, without paying any attention about it, I tried to reach out my hand from over the fence. As I did, one approached me trottingly.

After feeling around the tip of its beak with my hand, it snuggled up its cheek to my hand. Gotcha.

“Oh-, there, there.”

Since I’ve gone through the trouble of making it approach me, I also tried to pet its head. Oh, it obediently let me brush its head gently. Excellent.

...Somehow, I’m quite embarrassed, though.

“Ah, awesome. Ane-sama, you didn’t get poked at.”

“I was wondering whether it would be alright, but in the end, it seems like everything’s fine.”

“Oh my, oh my. Seiren-sama, it seems to be attached to you.”

I showed a smile to assure Saryuu who was afraid that I was doing fine. Gadou-san also seemed to be having fun as he smiled.

However, how do I say this, but it was quite a strange feeling that I got from touching it. Nah, judging from the appearance, the head is that of a crow’s, but when you touch it, it feels just like any normal beast. It’s not feather, but it feels as if I was touching a thin carpet. I wonder just what kind of nature does this world have?

After that, the other horses also approached me. Their colors were the single color of white, black, brown, with various kinds of spots, but their sizes were almost similar. Since they are small, they seem to be the baby horses, but could it be that they are adult horses already? Let's try asking.

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"Are these horses already adults?"

"Yes. They may be kept to keep a watch at the entranceway's gate, but nowadays there are also families who brought them to be kept as normal pets."

"Keeping a watch on the gate? Is it possible?"

Not a watchdog, but a watch-horse? I wonder if it's even possible. Oh well, it looks like it will be painful to be pecked by them.

"Yeah. The horses are all smart, so if they are trained, they will be able to watch the gate. Also, although they might be small, they still can carry a fair amount of cargo."

"If a thief comes, it seems that they will violently poke the thief to drive them away. ...I wonder why did Saryuu-sama get pecked at?"

"I didn't do anything! I only tried to regain the fodder that they took!"

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Ah, well, of course you'd get pecked at. Let's give it up, Saryuu, the grudge due to food is something scary.

Nevertheless, they can be used as watch-horse and to carry some luggage, eh.

Since their bodies are small, perhaps they eat less than the big ones. Which

means, even people who are not very rich can afford using them.

Their legs are also fat, and somehow they feel similar to donkey's legs. If that's not the case, perhaps they wouldn't be able to be kept just like this.

Keeping horses is quite hard, eh.

Change 39: Fighting, Goat Ranch

After playing with the horses for a while, we moved to the goat area, perhaps the one that Saryuu's been waiting for.

Ah, in the end, Saryuu didn't come any closer than the side of the horses' fence. In the future, I wonder if it's difficult if he is unable to mount a horse like Taiga-san? That's what I'm thinking about, but that can't be helped, I guess.

The goats' area is located higher than the horses' place, and the slope is quite steep. Oriza-san and Minoa-san helped me to walk, but it's still quite difficult.

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"I'm glad I came here with a low-heeled shoes..."

"As expected, it is not recommended to wear high heels here."

"Well, it is inevitable, right-"

"Yeah, and it is recommended for you to go to the translator's site and drop some comment there to motivate the translator to translate more chapters instead of reading this in aggregator site who simply stole the translator's efforts!"

Obviously, the maids are using shoes that are almost flat. There is no paved road, and that's why I wish I could use sneakers here.

And, finally we arrived after struggling on, and although the slope is quite steep, the meadows are very green and beautiful, and the goats are currently

eating the grasses. Occasionally, the goats' *'mee, mee'* voices could be heard, isn't that great?

Since the horses here have bird heads, I'm more or less prepared to face what kind of goats they will have here, but if we just eliminate the fact that they don't have any beard and that their front legs seem like they can be used to grasp things, then they are comparatively normal goats. For some reason, my wordings came out as quite weird, but that's my impression about the goats here. Ah, their horns are plump, and I think that it would hurt if you were to be head-butt by those horns.

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"This is the goats' area. Godou usually buy the goat milk and meat from here."

"You're properly doing the dealings even for your relatives, eh?"

"But of course, since we are also doing business here."

I guess so. Since you'd need to make a living in order to raise the horses and goats, even if he's your sibling, you'd still have to properly make money with the trade. If the relatives are unintelligible, then it might become troublesome later on.

Just once, but the orphanage director has ever grumbled, too. He lent some money to his younger brother, and in the end the little brother never returned it back, so the director said.

...The director also has a little brother. I only heard it that time, so I completely forgot about it.

Little brother, eh. Which reminds me, Saryuu has been fidgeting around since some time ago. ...Let's try asking him about the cheese.

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"Saryuu here loves goat cheese. Was it made using the goat milk here?"

"If it's something that Godou acquired, then that's likely the case. Even if we are mainly running a ranch, we are also producing cheese and butter."

"I have ever eaten the things that Gadou made, but how do I say it, somehow the taste feels different..."

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At Gadou-san's words, Saryuu tilted his head in puzzlement. Maki-san slightly shrugged her shoulders, and spun her words.

"It seems that the flavor would be slightly different depending on whether it was made at the villa or at the ranch. Shiiya's chefs are mostly processing meat and vegetables, and the reason behind that is quite understandable."

"Ah, really, so the flavor changes depending on the location of production. ...I will be receiving Godou-san's cheese, but I would like to try eating Gadou-san's cheese here, is that okay?"

"Yes. Please taste the cheese here and compare it with the cheese you've eaten. Whichever is more delicious, it will nevertheless be the pride of us brothers."

When requested, Gadou-san bowed his head very deeply. No, I think it's not something that exaggerated, though. I wonder if the name of Shiiya family is that amazing. Even until this very day, I still don't actually feel like that.

"Ah-, Seiren-sama, it's dangerous-let's come down-"

"Eh?"

"Didn't you hear me? Go to the translator's site, what are you doing, still

reading this where you can see all this unnecessary comments?!”

Towards Oriza-san’s slightly airheaded warning, I hurriedly raised my face. Eh-, somehow, one goat seems to be very eager to head over here. Since its horn is excessively big, I wonder if it is the boss here. Its front legs are kicking the ground, but it’s definitely now a bullfighting ox.

“Hey there, Gonzou! You, are you seriously eager to pick a fight even right before the young miss of the Shiiya family?!”

For a moment when I put myself on guard, I felt like wanting to fall over to Gadou-san’s voice. *Gonzou*, eh, is that the goat’s name?

Also, what did he mean by ‘*even*’? That goat, does it have the disposition of eagerly wanting to fight? And then, as expected, goats do not understand anything about feudal lords or nobles, so I think.

Well, as I was taken aback by various unfolding things before me, Oriza-san pulled my arm over. When we hurriedly go down, there is a person who’s stepping forward in exchange.

“...Did you intend to confront me again? You’re so persistent, Gonzou.”

“And guess who is persistent? You XD Come here, I want to know if you’re reading my translation!”

The one who’s cracking her knuckles while walking is Minoa-san. Gonzou’s eagerness to fight, could it be because Minoa-san is here?

“...Uhm, Gadou-san, what is that?”

“The boss of the goats here is Gonzou. Ever since he was defeated by Minoa-dono, it’s been an established custom for him to propose a rematch whenever she comes here.”

“...Could it be that he loses every time?”

“Yeah. Even though he’s invincible among the other goats.”

Watching Gadou-san’s expression as he deeply breathed a sigh, I couldn’t understand whether he is being serious or if he is only joking around.

Or should I say, Gonzou. Since you’re a goat, couldn’t you be satisfied with the

fact that you're invincible against the other goats? Well, if he could do that, then it wouldn't be a problem in the first place.

"Oh my, oh my. As a goat, isn't Gonzou-san quite old already?"

"That's right. It's about time for him to hand over his position as a boss to his junior, but as you can see, he's still quite vigorous."

Kuon-sensei laughed, it seems like she's enjoying this situation. Saryuu somehow had a distant look on his face, hey, don't you escape from reality. Kanna-san and Maki-san are having trouble to react.

Nevertheless, although her opponent is a goat, Minoa-san managed to gain victory each time? In the first place, she often boasts her own strength, but is she really that strong?

"...Oriza-san, is Minoa-san that strong?"

"That's why she's chosen as Seiren-sama's attendant, you know?"

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I couldn't say anything back at Oriza-san who's answering that with a cheerful smile.

Because she's strong, she's chosen as my maid. In other words, she's also chosen to act as a guard at the same time, eh?

So that the daughter who's finally returned after 18 years wouldn't go again to somewhere that they couldn't reach their hands to.

So that they could be reassured, those parents of mine chose a strong person to accompany me.

"Could it be that Oriza-san and Alica-san are strong, too?"

"If I'm serious, I think I can defeat even a male like the one over there-. Although it would seem tough to defeat someone like Taiga-san or several opponents alone."

“The same goes for me.”

“...We’re still unskilled, though.”

After Oriza-san talked, Kanna-san and Maki-san followed. Ah-, so it’s the same case for the maids who are accompanying Saryuu. Which reminds me, it seems that Saryuu’s been conducting his independent practice early in the morning so that nobody would notice it.

Both in battle abilities and the ability to erase your presence so that nobody would be able to notice it.

Somehow, I think that perhaps the maids here are ninja.

“Ane-sama.”

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Because of Saryuu’s voice, my consciousness returned to whatever is in front of me. The scenery that entered my line of sight is right at the moment when Gonzou, who’s finished his preparation to charge, kicked the ground.

Minoa-san received it with lightly letting her hips fall, and then readied the other half of her body. The arms and are raised from her chest, it somehow becomes something like a shield.

“Fuu.”

With a light breath, Minoa-san firmly seized the rushing Gonzou-san’s big horns. And, making use of the momentum when he dashed, she lifted him up and tossed him down.

“Meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee?!”

Ah-, this guy’s crying voice is also that of a goat’s. Somehow I feel relieved, wait, not that.

Just like that, Gonzou fell down head first—or contrary to my expectation, he rotated smoothly mid-air, and landed with his front legs. Ah, the front legs that

are supposed to be clutched tightly, are now firmly grasping the grass.

“Today’s victory goes to me again, right?”

“Mee, meeee!”

Minoa-san’s triumphant expression is oddly adorable. On the other hand, Gonzou... I don’t understand the expression of goats, but he neighed as if saying, *‘Damn it, I won’t lose next time,’* and ran off just like that.

While seeing the goat’s back figure off, Kuon-sensei clapped her hands. Furthermore, the way she’s clapping her hands, how should I say it, it seems very similar to the way of clapping hands that I know, no doubt about it. If I am not looking at the horses and the goats, I won’t understand if this really is a different world, yup.

“It was a splendid performance, Minoa-san.”

“No. ...I ended up showing something unsightly in front of Seiren-sama.”

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Minoa-san is a bit bashful in response to Kuon-sensei’s commendation, but right after that, she faced my way and deeply bowed her head. I thought to myself, *‘what was unsightly?’*, then I wonder if it is about her appearance during one-game match with Gonzou.

“Ah-no, more than anything, as long as you’re uninjured...”

Well, anyhow, that’s the only thing I can utter. Normally, one would get hurt if they were hit by a rushing goat.

Or should I say, that Gonzou goat, wasn’t he quite old in age already?

“Good grief. Just when is that Gonzou going to retire...?”

“Wouldn’t it be when he finally wins against Minoa-san?”

“Humph. Then, Gonzou wouldn’t retire forever, right?”

Do goats even have things such as retirement? I wonder if it's just the goats here.

Or perhaps I should say, Minoa-san. In the first place, why would you seriously have a match with a goat? Well, it's fine because you seem to be enjoying it, though.

Speaking about being serious.

"I should also try my best and get stronger. So that I won't lose against Maki and Kanna."

Saryuu who was staring fixedly at the confrontation between Minoa-san and Gonzou, strangely got motivated. It's good to see that he's clutching his fist in determination, but I wonder if that occasion would happen.

Well, I understand that he's doing his independent practice in the morning to get stronger in the first place. Probably, since it's certain that he will soon pass my physical strength from now on, I can only say good luck.

"Yes, we'll be waiting in anticipation, Saryuu-sama."

"Ah, but please don't compete with Gonzou, okay-?"

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Oh well. Maki-san who answered normally is fine, but Kanna-san, your object of comparison is absolutely wrong.

Change 40: The Appetizing, Farm Workshop

After taking one trip around the farm, we are now going to visit the farm's workshop that produced the cheese and butter.

Different from the other world, we are not being told about trivial details such as wash your hands properly or wear a white coat on top of your clothes, but I'm still doing them just in case. In any case, it's because we are handling things

that can be eaten.

The middle-aged man and woman who seemed to come from the neighborhood are stirring the goat's milk in a huge pot, and they seem to be stirring the solidified part to sever it despite not really knowing about lactic-acid bacilli, and I watched from afar. As expected, when I got too close that I could smell it, I lightly coughed.

"Seiren-samaa, here, a handkerchief."

"Ah, sorry, and thank you, Oriza-san."

I used the handkerchief that she gave me to cover my mouth. It would be bad if my cough contaminated the food. It would cause the cheese to go to waste.

The butter's ingredient was put into a container with a big lid, and it was greatly jolted. Since it's hard to shake it with bare arms, from what I can discern, the container seems to be jolted with magic power.

"Is it magic, Gadou-san?"

"That's correct. This way, we can preserve the same quality for all of our products."

I see. I thought that it was a method used anywhere else, but well, so long as it's a convenient and safe method, then it's good. After all, it's quite a terrible thing to have the ground jolted like this.

Anyway, at the cafeteria next to the workshop, they let us to taste a sample of the cheese and butter. There are also some baked breads that the neighboring family sold and some goat's milk too. This feels nice, it's kinda heartwarming.

Once I gulped down the cheese, *ah*, I thought of something. Godou-san's cheese got a heavy flavor, but when it was added to this morning's salad, the flavor perfectly went well with the fresh vegetables, but Gadou-san's cheese can be eaten as it is just fine.

"It's true. It really is different than Godou-san's cheese."

"Isn't it? That's good, Ane-sama also understands it."

You look so happy, Saryuu. Yes, well, with this, you will be able to understand how different they taste once you've eaten it. Since they are brothers, I thought

that they'd be able to make it taste similar, but the cheese tasted totally different.

"I think that Gadou-san's cheese tastes light. Saryuu seems to like the one with heavy flavor."

"Yes. Light flavor is also fine, but I guess I just like the one with heavy flavor more."

"Both Saryuu-sama and Seiren-sama possess good tongue. Thank you for being able to clearly state the difference."

Gadou-san also nodded happily. Not only Gadou-san's cheese, but perhaps the taste of the cheese will turn out different, depending on who's making them. Well, that's the thing with handmade products.

"I also like this one. It would be nice to have Gadou-san's products stocked up, too, and both of the products can be used properly, depending on what type of cuisine is being made."

"Understood. First, let's buy it in small stock, and then let's try to discuss it with the lord and chefs."

"Yeah. If Seiren-ojousama said so, then it was worth making all of this."

It's good that Minoa-san simply nodded, but I was somehow surprised by the fact that Gadou-san looked extremely happy.

No, I mean, it isn't something that can be exaggeratedly celebrated... I think. I'm just the feudal lord's daughter, that's all.

...Although I was quite embarrassed, I properly ate everything. The butter that was smeared on top of the bread tasted refreshing, and I thought that it was possible to eat the food with a lot of this butter with the way it tasted.

The breads over here have solid flavor, but it felt like the butter enhanced and supported the flavor. Unexpectedly, it can also be toasted, but... I wonder if it won't burn the breads that were once baked? I've never seen it ever since I came here, though.

So, we bought the cheese and butter that I liked as souvenirs, and left behind the farm.

Looking at Gadou-san and Gonzou-san who came to send us off without knowing, I let out a small laugh. This little one, I wonder if he's in his cool down period after he came running here? Somehow, he has a refined face.

"Well then, thank you very much for coming."

"Thank you. I had so much fun here."

"No, don't mention it. Seiren-sama and Saryuu-sama, please come and play here again. Kuon-sama is also welcomed."

"Yes. I hope that my grandfather will be able to come here too, next time."

Saryuu and I, then Kuon-sensei and Gaou-san exchanged words. Wouldn't it be nice for Jigen-san to come here even for once?

"Mee, mee."

"Gonzou. Please train hard until next time."

"Meeeeeeee!"

(T/N: Damn, Gonzou is cute. I want to keep him.)

What's with that, Gonzou? Do you seriously want to have another go with Minoa-san? Well, I don't know if it's categorized as a cold water for an old man, but don't overdo it.

"Seiren-sama, Saryuu-sama. We're leaving soon--"

"Thank you. Well then, shall we go?"

At the cue from Oriza-san who's finished with the preparation of the carriage, we started to move. Just like how it was when we went here, us siblings and Kuon-sensei got on different carriages than the maids, and we departed.

"Please come back soon, take care!"

Towards Gadou-san's voice that seemed to be quite reluctant to part ways with us, I slightly bent myself towards the carriage window and waved my hand. Inside the rattling and moving carriage, I tasted the smoked cheese that's among the souvenirs we bought. Oh, it smelled like chips, it felt nice. Tou-san, how about drinking sake with this?

“Seiren-sama, is it delicious?”

“Ah, yes. Since the original cheese tastes refreshing, when it’s made into a smoked food, it smelled of wood and felt nice.”

(T/N: Seriously, Seiren? O.O I can’t really imagine that kind of smell for food...?)

“Hee. May I taste it?”

“Sure. Kuon-sensei should try this too, eat it.”

“Oh my, is that alright? Then, I’ll do so without any hesitation.”

It’s not like they are for me to monopolize, though. When I give them to Saryuu and Kuon-sensei, the two of them put one piece each to their mouth and then opened their eyes as if they were astonished by the taste.

“Oh my. This might be a delicious companion to sake.”

“I guess I can also eat it during study break...”

Yosh, seems like they also like it. It also feels nice to know that it’s bit-sized that can be easily picked up to eat, the smoked cheese.

So, I was taking another piece into my mouth. When I was chewing it, Saryuu’s line of sight matched mine.

“Ane-sama, did you have fun at the farm?”

“Yes, it was a lot of fun. The horses and the goats are both very adorable.”

“Eh?”

The moment the word “horse” left my mouth, Saryuu pulled his body back, but it’s understandable why.

Well, it’s not like I don’t understand his feelings, but there is no need to react like that... or well, I guess I can say that because I’ve never been nudged by a horse.

“Nah, I mean, aren’t they cute enough when you see them?”

“I, is that so. I just don’t want to get that close to them, though.”

...Ah-, he’s turning blue. With this, I think I won’t ever see Saryuu riding on top

of a horse, I guess.

Taiga-san looked perfectly cool so I thought that Saryuu would also look cool when he's mounting a horse.

"Saryuu-sama. If you can overcome your fear of horses, you might be able to give Seiren-sama a ride, you know?"

"Eh?"

When Kuon-sensei whispered those words, Saryuu's movement instantly stopped. No, please wait a moment, why me?

"Yo, yosh, then I will do my best!"

"Wait, Saryuu. Are you okay with me being your riding companion? Perhaps some other girl would be better..."

Towards my younger brother who easily got motivated, I thrust my comment in a panic.

After all, the one who will be riding the horse together with you when you've gone through all the efforts to conquer the trauma is your big sister, how would that play out?

"Because I have never really associated myself with other women except for Kaa-sama, Nee-sama, and the maids."

"...So it's like that?"

"That's right. Although I think that so long as you go out to the city, there will be ladies whose age are close to Saryuu-sama."

Both Saryuu and Kuon-sensei said that with an expression that seemed to say, *'isn't that obvious?'*. Ah-, well, there are no things such as schools and part-time jobs like the other world, huh. With that, there are no chances of associating with people from the opposite gender.

...But hey, I went to school and worked part time, but I only had a few friends. Isn't that no good?

"Well, I guess there are various reasons..."

I sighed a bit and continued to chew the remaining cheese inside of my

mouth.

While we are all noisily chattering with one another, the carriage finally arrived back at the villa.

When I got down with Saryuu's help, I saw another carriage that I've never seen before, stopping by in front of the villa. It is similar to the one we're riding on today, but that carriage is colored in black with golden plant pattern painted on it. Ah-, for some kind of reason, it reminded me of a [bowl](#) or stacked [food boxes](#). I think that my way of thinking is quite poor.

Anyway, the villa's front door was opened, and there was a person coming out of it. The person was a middle-aged man with quite a sturdy body, and.

Upon taking a look at that person's face, I froze on the spot.

"...!"

The orphanage director?

Why is this person here, at this kind of place?

Change 41: Thus, Their Same Names

Without noticing me whose body stiffened, Saryuu said, "Ah," and stepped forward. His voice sounded somewhat happy yet at the same time tiresome, and I heard that his voice was quite doubtful.

"Shikino's Tou-sama ? So, you've come as well?"

"Ooh, Saryuu, you've come home. It's good that you look lively."

Looking at Saryuu's face, the director... I mean, the person whose appearance is similar to him, intimately greeted Saryuu. The person whose voice is even similar to him, comfortably wore clothes resembling a gown with an embroidered red vest on top of it. If he removed that, I bet he'd look very similar to the director.

'Shikino's Tou-sama,' is that how Saryuu called him?

That person is the current head of the Shikino family, *Shikino Touya*.

He has the same name as the orphanage director, **Shikino Touya**, who raised

me.

...Also, the same face.

“ ... ”

I feel dizzy. And strangely, it feels unpleasant.

For some reason, I felt like I was seeing something I shouldn't be seeing.

Precisely at that time, Kaa-san, and then Tou-san also came out. Perhaps, they came out to see this person off.

“Oh my, Saryuu, you've returned? Seiren, too... what's wrong?”

“Seiren? Did something happen?”

“Seiren-sama?”

“Ane-sama?”

“I, I'm fine. I slightly felt sick from the journey in the carriage, perhaps.”

Towards my parents and my younger brother who rushed off to me in a panic, I tried my best to show them a smile. Since Minoa-san supported my back from the side, I didn't end up showing an unsightly appearance by collapsing in front of other people. Yesterday, I fell sick due to the carriage journey, so there won't be anyone who would doubt my excuse.

However, I felt a somewhat intense sensation. Since my body is fine, it seems like my mental state was the cause of it.

By the time I managed to somehow rearrange my posture, the one person whose face is exactly the same as the orphanage director deliberately turned over to face me. Whoa, they really look alike. Even their hair color, the expression of their eyes, their mouths, even their physiques are all exactly the same. Although with this current distance, I can't see his eye color.

“Oh? Could you be Seiren-ojousama, Mondo-dono?”

“...Yeah. She is my adorable daughter who finally managed to return home this spring.”

Tou-san gave him the answer in my stead. Since I'm supposed to be [the daughter with frail body], so there won't be any problem even if he said so.

However, could it be that this person knew that it wasn't exactly the case?

But, since I [was getting better, so I returned home]. That's why, I need to properly deliver my greetings. I can't afford being a burden to everyone.

"I'm Seiren. How do you do. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"...Yeah, how do you do. I'm serving as the head of Shikino family, my name is Touya. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

I properly pulled the hem of my skirts, as Kuon-sensei instructed, and slightly bowed down. The way he returned my greetings in a similar manner, it was like the introduction between two complete strangers.

Ah, I'm glad. This person isn't the director. He's just someone who's similar to him.

However, since they are too alike, it frankly made me feel unpleasant. The ones who actually noticed it were Oriza-san and Minoa-san, perhaps because they have always been by my side.

"Seiren-sama? Ah, you look a little bit tired, let's return to your room."

"That's right. Please excuse us, Seiren-sama's health slightly deteriorated, so we will be taking our leave right now. Kuon-sensei, will you please come along with us?"

"Understood. Well then, please excuse me, Shikino family's Lord."

Oriza-san smoothly proceeded the conversation. While smiling, she grasped my hand.

Minoa-san also answered, and together with Kuon-sensei, they circled their hands to support my back. With that, somehow I felt relieved. Just like that, I headed towards the entranceway with everyone's support.

I think that my parents might be making an anxious expression, but in order to send Touya-san off, they stayed in that spot. Saryuu, too, since it was his own biological father, he didn't come with me. It can't be helped though, yup.

As it is, I somehow returned to my own room. Minoa-san and Kuon-sensei put me down on the bed, and examined my complexion. When Kuon-sensei's hand touched my forehead, it was somewhat cold and felt good.

“It doesn’t seem to be a fever... Seiren-sama, are you okay?”

“Yes, somehow.”

“Oriza is taking some drinks right now. Do you have anything you want to have?”

“...Ah-, I want something warm so it could somehow relieve me.”

“Understood. Kuon-sensei, please take care of Seiren-sama for a little while.”

“I understand.”

After they finished their exchange, Minoa-san left me in Kuon-sensei’s care and left the side of my bed half-running. And, Kuon-sensei once more examined me unblinkingly. Well, I understand her feelings, though.

“Did something happen?”

“...Uhm, the face, look alike.”

I couldn’t get the words out correctly. With just that, it’s no wonder if she can’t understand my words. Aah but, I can’t really mention his name, but if I don’t say it, then she won’t get what I mean.

“I have returned. Seiren-sama, Saryuu-sama has also come.”

And, at that moment, I heard Minoa-san’s voice. So fast, so I thought, but that’s right, she returned right after she conveyed my request to Oriza-san. Anyhow, she met Saryuu, huh.

Saryuu, eh. Did he come here because he wanted to hear the story from me?

“Come in.”

“Yes. Please come on in, Seiren-sama has given her permission.”

“Thank you. Nee-sama, are you alright?”

Just right after hearing my answer, Saryuu leaped in my room as if he was brushing Minoa-san aside. Kuon-sensei stared in her amazement, perhaps it was due to my giving my little brother the permission to enter the room under this condition, I guess.

“Anyway, Saryuu, has father returned?”

“Yes. Uhm, did something happen?”

“You visited right now just to ask that, right?”

Kuon-sensei answered Saryuu and slightly moved sideways. And my little brother smoothly slipped into the empty space she made. His expression as he peered in my face—yup, he’s extremely worried.

“Their faces completely look alike. Their voices, too.”

Feeling calmer after looking at Saryuu, I finally managed to spit that out. Somehow or another, they should be able to comprehend it, right?

“Completely alike? ...ah, could it be.”

After thinking for a moment, Saryuu raised his surprised face. He managed to properly realize it.

I guess it’s because he already knew the fact about their same names. However, I still appreciate him for understanding what I meant.

“Similar to **Shikino Touya** who’s raised Nee-sama, is it?”

“...yes.”

Look. I’m glad, I don’t know if it’s just my luck, but I managed to make Saryuu understand it.

Now that I think about it, I haven’t told this to Sensei and my maids. It’s somewhat hard to say.

Because of that reason, Kuon-sensei had this wondering expression, as she exchanged her look between me and Saryuu.

“Shikino, Touya?”

“The person who’s raised me until I returned to Shiiya family. He’s called **Shikino Touya.**”

As I managed to mention his name even when I almost chewed on my tongue, Kuon-sensei and Minoa-san who was besides her, widened their eyes.

“He has the same name as the head of Shikino family? Oh my, my.”

“Is that true, Seiren-sama?”

“Although I don’t have any evidence, but I’m certain. They both have the same names, same faces, and same voices. Since he was like my foster parent for 18 years, I clearly remember him.”

Ah-, I somehow couldn’t bear to look at their expressions. I reflexively shifted my gaze towards my arms.

I couldn’t be crying right now, right? Although it’s not the first time it happened, but it was the voice and face that I missed.

“...It couldn’t be possible.”

I understand what Saryuu muttered.

Having the same names, similar faces, and voices that sounded alike. Although their worlds are separate, but there are two people with exact similarities.

Although they couldn’t possibly be the very same person, no matter how you think about it.

“Yeah, generally speaking, it shouldn’t be possible. However, since we have come to this conclusion, I can’t help but to think that there’s something behind it.”

Minoa-san said with a lower voice than her usual one, however she still clearly said that. I spontaneously removed my gaze from my arms and looked at her face.

She is not like her calm self even when she was confronting Gonzou, right now, she’s having a completely tensed expression.

Kuon-sensei, too, is gazing with her cold stare that she normally didn’t show, and I turned around to examine everyone’s expression.

“Saryuu-sama. I and everyone else will be careful, but you should be more careful, as well. Although I think it might be hard for you to do, since he is your biological father.”

“No. My father is Shiiya Mondo.”

Although Saryuu said so, but his expression was filled with uneasiness. I can understand, since he is his father by blood.

And that father of his, has something peculiar going on. At least he has the same figure and the same name as the person who raised me.

I'm sorry for involving you in such a trouble.

"...Sorry. I..."

"It's fine. Since Nee-sama [has a weak constitution], right?"

Referring to the ostensible reason as to why I didn't show myself to the public for the last 18 years, my younger brother who was supposed to be a child, smiled at me.

When that expression suddenly overlapped with Taiga-san's face, I was slightly surprised. Why would that person's face come to my mind?

...It's because he is Saryuu's older brother. Perhaps, that's why.

"Seiren-samaa, I'm bringing in the soup you requested-"

At the slightly idiotic tone of voice that Oriza-san, who didn't listen to our conversation, let out, the tension we had from having that serious conversation was quickly interrupted all at once. I see, so she made me a soup.

Change 42: Secretly, Before and After Dinner

When I came to, the inside of my room has gotten dark. I fell asleep on the bed, and to my side is... ah, Oriza-san is there.

After drinking the warm soup, my consciousness straightly disappeared. I see, perhaps since I felt relieved, I fell asleep.

When I lightly moved my body, Oriza-san quickly noticed that I was awake.

"Seiren-sama, good morning-. Are you feeling well?"

"Ah, morning. Yup, somehow... aah, the soup was delicious. Thank you."

"Don't mention it-. When I was told about your request of something warm and relieving, I was thinking between cocoa or soup. But I'm glad that it suited your taste-."

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Oriza-san's smiling face slightly felt childish, but I think that's what gives me a peace of mind. No, it wasn't only limited to Oriza-san, but rather, the maids who have been accompanying me, Kuon-sensei, and Saryuu's smiles can make me feel relieved.

Although I also like cocoa, I think I'm glad that I had soup today. Now that I think about it, the last thing I drank at the other world, it was cocoa.

Ah, the soup that Oriza-san made and brought to me contained smashed vegetables similar to pumpkins with goat milk diluted evenly in it. It tasted sweet, and once I gulped it, it gave me feeling of relief. I don't know how everyone here calls crouton, but it would be delicious to put bread's crust inside. But the crusts shouldn't be fried or baked. Well, it's fine.

"...Uh-m."

Suddenly, Oriza-san hesitantly opened her mouth as if she was trying to utter something hard to say. As I recognized her serious expression, there's no doubt that it's something important. That's why I'm waiting for her next words patiently.

"I have heard this from Kuon-sensei and Minoa, it's about the person who's raised Seiren-sama..."

"Ah, so you have heard about it."

"Yes."

I see, so she has heard about it.

That's right, why am I fumbling down? I have talked about it with Saryuu, Minoa-san, and Kuon-sensei, but Oriza-san was absent at that time because she was making a soup for me. However, I think she has the right to know about that circumstances of mine. But the person who brought that topic up was Oriza-san right after she entered my room.

"Uhm, that. About it, everyone is quite confused about whether or not we should discuss it with the Master and Madam."

"With Father and Mother?"

“Yes. Uhm, with how they share the same name and appearance, we can’t help but think that there might be something else-“

Oriza-san subtly mumbled. Somehow, I could understand her point.

Shikino Touya is a feudal lord and Saryuu’s biological father.

That person shares the same name, face, and even voice with the person who raised me in the other world as my substitute parent.

Really, you can’t help but think that there is something going on about this.

Though we call it *the other world*, but I have crossed the barrier between the two worlds twice. In other words, uhm, you-know-what, yup.

The orphanage director that I know too, it won’t be strange to say that there is a likelihood in which he crossed that barrier as well, or any other possibilities.

In the first place, the person who gave the name Seiren to me in the other world was the orphanage director. Though it is more likely because there’s an embroidery of my name in the clothes I wore. The set of alphabets used here is quite similar to the set of alphabets used in the other world.

However, I get the feeling that it’s not something we can end just by saying that it’s just a coincidence.

“Seiren-sama, what do you want to do?”

Oriza-san slightly tilted her head, inquiring my opinion.

It is no doubt my main problem. That’s why I think it’s justified for her to ask for what I want to do.

That’s why, I honestly spoke my own honest opinion.

“...To be honest, I don’t want to involve my parents too much. In addition, if I were to tell this to my father and the others, wouldn’t the problem get more serious?”

“Eh-. The problem will surely escalate, but...”

Isn’t that so? If worse comes to worst, it could end up in a dispute between the Shiiya and the Shikino. Nah, I can’t really explain why, but that’s my hunch.

If a dispute between fellow feudal lords arises, perhaps it won’t just remain a

simple matter. As expected, I want to prevent this problem from getting into a serious matter. Especially since it's a problem between the house in which Saryuu was born into and the house in which he's living in right now.

Nevertheless, I don't intend to leave the problem as it is, though.

"That's why, for the time being, let's not discuss it with my father and the others, but why don't we discuss it with Jigen-san?"

"With Jigen-sensei?"

Oriza-san was surprised as her originally round eyes turned even rounder. Haha, since he is nowhere in the vicinity right now, so she didn't consider him, I guess. However, when I thought of that problem, the first person to appear in my mind was none other than him.

In any case, perhaps the one who understands what's happening to me the most is Jigen-san.

"Yes. Since the person who brought me home to the Shiiya household was Jigen-san, so he would surely understand the circumstances better."

"So that's why, I understand. Then, I will tell Kuon-sensei and Minoa about this."

"Yes, could you please do that? Ah, and later on, could you also tell Saryuu about this?"

"I understand-. After all, Saryuu is the one most concerned about Seiren-sama-."

As she clenched her fists and assumed a triumphant pose, I thought to myself that the people in this world also did that pose, eh. Although I'm quite sure that the way they're called is different, but I forgot what. As expected, since it's a gesture done by putting your power in it, the way they are done is quite similar.

Because Minoa-san came and asked me about what I would like to do about dinner, I decided to eat. Ah well, I certainly suffered from mental damage, but my stomach was also empty. In any case, while I was thinking about what I should do, my stomach rumbled. First of all, I washed my face, hands, and feet, then got changed. I wore a comfortable salmon pink one piece, which is my

favorite, to be honest, due to its comfortable fabric. I myself think that I've become accustomed to some weird things.

"Seiren-sama. Is your condition all right now?"

Once I showed up in the dining room, Godou-san rushed over to me in a panic. Aah yes, for a frail daughter to spend all her time in bed right after she went home, of course he would be worried. Sorry.

"Ah, yeah. I feel considerably better after I slept. Sorry for making you worried."

"No, no. Please don't overdo yourself."

When I lightly bowed my head, Godou-san also bowed his head. As I felt like it would go on forever like this if I were to continue, I quickly took a seat because to be frank, I feel really hungry. Nah, it's the truth.

All the family members aside from me have gathered at the dining table, so I can easily see how their gazes are now focused on me. For the time being, I could only bow my head down to them.

"Tou-san, Kaa-san, Saryuu. Sorry for making you all worried."

"Y, yeah."

"For you to come here to eat dinner, does that mean you're already fine?"

"Yes. I have told Godou-san before, but I feel considerably better after I slept."

"I see, that's good. Right, dear?"

"...Ah, yeah, that's good."

"Tou-sama was worried and didn't calm down until he heard that you've calmed down after drinking Oriza-san's soup."

"Sa, Saryuu. Don't say anything unnecessary."

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Saryuu's remark caused Tou-san's face to turn red up until his ears. Kaa-san also giggled, and the atmosphere suddenly changed.

Aah, well. It's no doubt that I feel bad for making them all worried over me, but I wonder if it's alright, especially about father?

I wonder if a father who has a daughter around my age is supposed to act like this? As I don't know any other example, I can't help but be a little bit worried.

Well, anyhow, since the whole family members have gathered, we begin to eat. We're having a salad with chicken meat and roasted beef... Yes, even over here, the beef still tastes like a normal beef. In addition, we also have cream soup and vegetable stew. Yup, I'm relieved that they have tender taste.

So, in the middle of eating, Tou-san asked me and Saryuu.

"Seiren, Saryuu. Tomorrow we will go visit the grave, what do you think of it? If you like, you can also rest here."

From his line of sight, I know that he's mainly asking that to me. That's natural, since my physical condition was disturbed after I returned from going out to play.

But well, I think that it won't turn out to be like what occurred today. More or less it was because I just learned that Touya-san is exactly like the orphanage director.

That's why, I nodded and said, "I'm fine."

"Is that so. Saryuu, what about you?"

"Eh, ah, yes. Since Ane-sama is fine, then I will also go."

No, my health and your coming to the grave are not connected at all. Or is he that worried about me?

Ah well, because everyone is here, I'll be fine. Probably.

"I see. Seiren, please don't push yourself."

"Yes. I will properly tell you if I'm feeling unwell."

I quickly turned towards my mother who looks seriously worried and properly answered.

To be honest, I was totally saved because there were my maids during when I met Touya-san.

There is a saying about how “a honest man is the best”, and I guess that’s true. It’s better for you to properly say that you’re tired when you feel tired.

After dinner, Kuon-sensei came into my room. It seems like she’s been making the necessary preparations in secret immediately after she heard the story from Oriza-san.

“I have dispatched a delivery snake to my grandfather, so I think that he would have received it by today.”

“Thank you very much... wait, snake?”

So people over here are using delivery snakes? In the other world, we’re using doves to deliver messages.

Or rather, snakes are creatures that slitheringly crawl on the ground, right? By today, it means that it would be delivered in the middle of the night, right?

Hmm, I wonder if everything will be alright?

“Yes, a snake. It is of a rare type that has wings growing on its back. With those wings, it can fly around the ground.”

“...It can fly...”

...I see, so it can fly. With a distant look, I began to wonder which one would be faster, that snake or a dove?

Horses and snakes here can fly. Ah well, that’s the way this world works, yup.

By the way, I just realized. If they could deliver the information that fast, I wonder why haven’t their population spread more?

Up until now, I haven’t seen any flying snake at all. No, it’s odd how I haven’t seen it at all despite it should fly around the ground.

“Eh? But it isn’t being used that much, is it?”

“Because they only get attached to magicians. Also, I don’t know how it works in Seiren-sama’s former world, but it’s slightly feared because it can only be used by magicians.”

“Ah, I see.”

I nodded at her explanation. That’s well, it’s still a snake regardless.

Besides, from the book that I read before, I know that there are poisonous snakes even in this world. Also, because we can collect honey, it means that there are also bees here, so the basic ecosystem here isn't really that different from the other world's.

Well, if you put it that way, of course those snakes would be feared.

Still, Kuon-sensei uses such a snake.

"...In other words, Kuon-sensei has the qualities of a magician, right?"

"It's because my grandfather is that grandfather, so I think I should possess it a bit. I haven't really studied it properly though, and honestly I don't really have an interest in it."

Ah-, as expected that kind of quality is affected by blood.

In addition, there are snakes that can only be used by magicians, huh. It feels kinda like how the witches from the other world's fairy-tales are typically using cats or frogs.

Change 43: Quietly, The Grave Visit

Note: *In this chapter, we'll be talking about funeral customs, and assuming that the custom described in this chapter takes after a Japanese's funeral procedure, do note that I don't have any deep understanding around that topic. If you happen to understand more about the custom described in this chapter and would like to offer better suggestions on how I wrote the translation, feel free to do so! ^^*

The next morning, as expected, Taiga-san didn't show his face. Nah-, if he really comes today, it's no doubt that Minoa-san will throw a basket or something else this time. As I thought that it was somewhat unfortunate, perhaps I wanted to escape from reality for a bit.

Before the breakfast, Kuon-sensei unusually came. I barely finished changing clothes, so it's a safe. No, regardless of how I view myself inside, my body is of a female's, so there won't be a problem even if I was seen by her, right? But, still.

"Seiren-sama."

There was something wriggling about on top of Kuon-sensei's shoulder. Upon taking a closer look, it was a light green colored snake.

At its back... uhm, it's more like at the snake's 'shoulders' judging from its position, there were a bird's wings as big as around half of its body. Which means, it's the living example of the snakes that can only be used by magicians.

Still, are all the wings of the animals over here birds' wings? Come to think about it, I have never seen a bat so far.

"I have received a reply from my grandfather. He said that he would be investigating the things over there, so we should be careful of our surroundings."

"Right. Yes, I understand."

"Also, he asked how about talking this to your parents? He said that the timing would come very soon, wouldn't it?

"Timing?"

"Yes."

During the conversation with Kuon-sensei, the snake was staring fixatedly at me. Ah yes, that's right, whatever it is, I will be concerned about it later.

Even so, what is it with the timing to tell my father and my mother? I wonder if any flag has been raised? Well, for the moment, let's stop thinking about it first.

Anyway, the snake. It's light green with black pupils, and its wings are emerald green. I think it's quite pretty. Yes, the snake is unexpectedly cute. That being the case, since I was a man that recently became a woman, it's not like I can suddenly exclaim, "Kyaa-!". Humans don't easily change on the inside.

"Shaa-"

Ah, it intimidated me. Apparently, it seems that I have no quality to be a magician.

(T/N: Whaaaat?! No, Seiren, I had hopes that you'd be a magician T__T)

After having breakfast, today, my family will be going to visit the graveyard all

together... in other words, we're going out to a grave visit. Well, it's because I said yesterday, 'I will be going tomorrow.'

Nonetheless, we mainly wear black clothes during when we go to funeral or occasions like that even here, but since it's only a grave visit, we are not dressed in a complete black. Because today, the dress that I'm wearing has the pattern of a checked light blue color. Since it's a high neck that covers up until the bottom of my neck, the pendant goes inside. Since we're going on a grave visit, today, the bigger ring is being hung on the necklace.

Using the carriage that I rode in yesterday, perhaps it would take around 5 minutes. The road is comparatively flat, or should I say that it's a well-maintained road. When we headed a little bit deeper into the forest, there were several gravesites. The gravesites were buildings similar to little houses, and if one doesn't know it, it would look like a village.

The horses and carriages stopped before a gravesite... Well, there was a spot that looked like a parking place, so we got off the carriage over there. So, the thing that I saw over there was a white crow-headed horse. A-ga-in, hu-h-?

"...Hey Saryuu, that is..."

"...That's Nii-sama's horse."

I exchanged glances with Saryuu. My younger brother's lips, the corner of it was stiff. I think I probably have the same expression.

"Oh my, oh my. Taiga-dono, so you have come."

"That's right."

My mother is laughing happily, but my father has a serious expression with his arms folded. Well, I guess he has lots of things in his mind.

"...Can I throw something at him?"

"Minoa, you'd better stop that, you know?"

"That's right. If you throw something here, it's more likely that Minoa will be the one flying-."

"...I'm begging you, please stop it..."

Towards Minoa-san who's somehow motivated, Oriza-san and Kanna-san said the words to encourage her to stop it, but their expressions didn't indicate the same thing. It seems that the most serious Maki-san is having a great trouble over it.

"Well, well. There should be a reasonable motive to throw something. That's why, let's stop it."

"Or should I say, did you seriously want to throw something at him, Minoa-san?"

"Eh, no, that's not it!"

When Kuon-sensei and I rebuked her, Minoa-san shook her head around in a panic. After that, the swinging stopped perfectly. Of course, it's because we perfectly recognized the figure of the person who rode the white horse.

"Ooh. Everyone from the Shiiya family, Seiren-sama. I'm glad that we could meet here."

Right, he finally showed up. The voice that I have heard for 3 consecutive days. The one who's appearing with small steps from the inside is that person, Shikino Taiga. Today, he's wearing an outfit with white base and accented strong red. Hee, the color combination is suitable, with this person.

No, this is wrong. Why would he address only me differently from the rest of my family? Can I really say that he's seriously targeting me, this person?

"Taiga-dono. If I'm not wrong, I heard from Touya-dono that Shikino's grave visit was done yesterday?"

"Yes, that's right, but... that, I thought that I wanted to see Seiren-sama, that's just it. Besides, wouldn't it be good for me as a big brother to greet the ancestors of the family that's been taking care of Saryuu?"

Towards the question that my father whose veins sticking out for no reason, Taiga-san answered indifferently with his refreshing smile. Aa-aah, Kaa-san seems to be enjoying this as much as he does.

Or well, where should I thrust my comment into the conversation? You, didn't you just go to someone else's room first thing in the morning yesterday? How

would you want to see me that bad? I think you don't know this, but I'm a man on the inside.

Well, it doesn't seem like there's any particular trouble for having someone outside of our group around, and so Taiga-san is coming to do a grave visit to the Shiiya's together with us. I can understand his feelings of wanting to greet the ones who've been taking care of his little brother, somehow.

In this world, it's fundamentally just a burial, so it seems. Then, the grave's dug up a few years later after it's become bones, put it in the urn again, and repair the grave. Being buried in the ground is a necessary preparation in order to join your ancestors, and by becoming bones and by being turned into bones and being put inside the jar would mean that the person's spirit has been cleared, and then that person shall become the revered ancestor.

The graveyards of my family and Shikino family are located in a deeper part than the initial burial place. And, in the building located right in front of my eyes, the funerary urns of our ancestors are lined up there, so we will visit them to pay our respects there.

Shikino family's graveyard is located in the forefront, but the graveyard of Shiiya family is located in the deepest part of the village of graves. There seems to be some remnants of the past where our principal residence was still located around this area. The greatest higher-ups seem to be located in the deeper area.

"Come to think about it... There's something that I'm curious about."

Right after we finished our grave visit, Taiga-san abruptly opened his mouth. Ah, the method of this world's grave visit is by putting our offerings while joining our hands... no, I mean, joining our hands together in prayers. The god that's believed in this world is basically the God of Sun that feels lonely, so during when we show our faces to our ancestors, it seems like we are praying while taking the god's loneliness into account.

Putting that aside, our gazes are focused on Taiga-san.

"Something you're curious about?"

"It's about Shikino family. However, it's a topic that I can't talk about at

home.”

“Which is why, I wonder if it’s good for you to leak it out to the Shiiya? Won’t you succeed the Shikino house soon?”

It’s just as my mother said. The matter of Taiga-san’s family that he can’t talk about in his house, generally, it’s a dangerous matter. Even if our family adopted Saryuu, I wonder if it won’t cause a trouble to talk about it with another family?

“That’s right, but... I believe that the circumstances surrounding my father might have some connection with Seiren-sama.”

“With me?”

“Yes.”

I reflexively pointed at myself, and Taiga-san nodded in response. Which reminds me, if I’m careless, Touya-san might find out about my going to the other world.

“My father had a younger brother who was born in the same year. I heard that he passed away a bit before I was born.”

“I know about it. After that, there were various problems, or so it seemed.”

My mother answered. In the first place, my mother lived nearby Shikino’s household, that’s why I think she is more well-informed regarding the condition of the Shikino family compared to the rest of my family.

Nonetheless, I have heard about it roughly. I heard that he was born of a different mother and passed away due to falling from the horse.

“It’s about that younger brother of my father, or in other words, my uncle, Touka... There was a record that he was buried in Shikino’s graveyard, but there was no record of his reburial.”

“Eh?”

“My paternal grandmother’s been properly reburied. She’s my grandfather’s legal wife who passed away around the same time.”

Taiga-san’s facial expression didn’t really change as he continued to speak

hesitantly. More or less, I couldn't really comprehend the meaning behind his words. My general knowledge around that matter was still thin, so no matter how I thought about the meaning behind his words, I couldn't really understand it.

"However, only my uncle hasn't been lined up here until this very day. Since the current head of the family is my father, if he doesn't instruct for my uncle's reburial, then it won't do. That's why..."

"...How so?"

"I wonder why. If we don't offer his bones and put it in the jar, then he won't be able to join the other ancestors who're lined up there to protect the household."

Therefore, my response was categorized as thin. My father's stunned expression and my mother's words are the common sense here.

I have mentioned it earlier, but a burial alone won't be enough here. The burial was just a preparatory phase in order that the person could become the family's ancestor or the family's guardian spirit. It's a standard funeral procedure to have a proper reburial until it's been turned into a funerary urn.

If their bones weren't put into a jar, then that person would continuously be in preparation phase, and it seems that the person won't be able to go anywhere else and would be lost. That's why, even if it was a deceased person with no one to tend the grave, they would still be prepared until their bones could be entered into the jar properly within the span of approximately one year, and they would be taken care of as if they were the whole gravesite's ancestor.

So, in case of large households like the Shikino's, the responsibility of ensuring the process fell to the head of a family. What Taiga-san meant by the reburial's instructions must be made by Touya-san was such a thing. Instead of bearing the responsibility, it seems like he's having a full authority.

However, it would be strange for him not to handle the whole process even for his younger brother of a different mother. To put things bluntly, it was something very thoughtless of him. First and foremost, that younger brother's mother was properly put into a funerary urn, so that was even more the case.

...Younger brother, huh.

Suddenly, I wanted to ask something strange.

“...Uhm. May I ask you something that might be quite impolite?”

“Yes?”

Taiga-san directly turned around to face me as he heard my words. I’m going to ask something quite strange, so sorry for that.

“Your uncle, Touka-sama... have you ever heard from your family about him, like how was his appearance?”

“No, not at all.”

Taiga-san shook his head in response to my question, without even pausing a bit to think. He answered flatly.

Then, he added more words to complement his response.

“There is no portrait of him, and the servants who worked during the time my uncle lived have all resigned or passed away. There were only several people remaining who were appointed to their own roles by my father, but since they were on bad terms with my uncle to begin with, they didn’t really want to talk about him.”

“...Why is that, I wonder?”

That was not my words, but it was Kuon-sensei’s.

Certainly, I wonder why. Or more precisely, there was absolutely something going on in the Shikino family.

It was as if they wanted to completely erase the traces of the person named Touka.

“Speaking of the servants...”

Then, Taiga-san seems like he just remembered something else. He opened his eyes wide and his face seemed to be quite pale.

“Our exclusive magician was replaced around the time when Seiren-sama was born, so it seems. Still, the whereabouts of that magician before was completely unknown since then.”

“The magician who’s gone, it’s about Doumu-dono, right? Right after Seiren was born, I remember that he came along with Touya-dono to congratulate us.”

Mother, I thought that you only knew the magician who worked for Shikino family, but to think that he had ever visited our house? Ah, that is not really weird, though.

But he has ever met me, huh. As expected, since I was barely born at that time, I really couldn’t recall it.

“...What did you say, right after that?”

“Yes, that Doumu. I remember that he disappeared approximately one month after he visited Shiiya’s house.”

“Huh?”

“...Around that time, the exclusive magician that served our house also disappeared. We had Jigen-san come and then we relied on him afterwards.”

My father muttered those words in a low voice, as if to drown out my voice. At that instant, the atmosphere of the place turned heavy at once.

The magician who visited right after my birth to congratulate my family disappeared one month after that.

The magician who worked for Shiiya family also disappeared around the same time.

Isn’t that at the same time around my disappearance from the Shiiya family, too?

Change 44: The Spurious Talk About the Past’s Secret

Silence ensued, and it was not because we were in a graveyard.

It’s because we came to understand various things, but they are not something comparatively fancy. That’s why, nobody can utter any single word.

However, something suddenly came to my mind. Could it be that the [timing] Jigen-san talked about was referring to this right now?

That is why I abruptly shifted my gaze towards Kuon-sensei. When I did so, Kuon-sensei gazed back at me and slowly nodded. Deep inside her eyes beneath the glasses, she seemed to be saying that it would be all right.

Yosh.

“...Uhm.”

I raised my voice daringly. I can easily understand how everyone present in this place quickly shifted their gazes to me all at once.

“There’s something that I would like everyone here to hear. Including Taiga-san, too.”

“Me too?”

“Yes. Since it’s about your father.”

Taiga-san, whose name I mentioned, turned around to face me as he seemed to be surprised.

Normally, it wouldn’t be so weird if I were to say that this was a talk addressed only for those who belong to the Shiiya household, but it can’t be helped since the content of the talk is related to him.

That’s why, I think it is better for me to inform this matter to him at the same time. Besides, Taiga-san also disclosed some information about his own family because he considered that it might be related to me.

“...Understood. Let’s listen to it.”

“Seiren-sama, go ahead. It will be all right.”

Kuon-sensei replied after Taiga-san nodded, and then smiled. ...since she is Jigen-san’s granddaughter, I can’t help but wonder if there is something. Even so, I can’t understand what.

“Ane-sama?”

“Seiren?”

The men of our family are somehow wearing the same expressions on their faces. After living as a parent and child for so many years, they have become so much alike, huh? Meanwhile, my mother was staring at me. She had the

expression that said, ‘I will accept anything, so come and say it.’

In that case, I would just go and say it.

“...Actually, uhm...”

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Tentatively, since Taiga-san was here, I skillfully omitted the explanation about how I grew up in a different world. In other words, I only explained how the person who raised me had the same name, same face, and the same voice as Taiga-san’s father.

Nah, as expected that both my parents and Taiga-san’s expressions all went blank. Especially mother. Suffice to say that my mother was childhood friends with Touya-san.

“Father and that person are really that alike?”

“Yes. And so, the moment I first saw his face, I couldn’t really comprehend what was going on.”

“Ane-sama rested lightly afterwards. Even when I talked with Father Shikino for a while, I couldn’t help but be worried about Ane-sama’s condition.”

I nodded and answered Taiga-san who furrowed his brows as he asked for my confirmation. Based on Saryuu’s way of speech, it seemed that Touya-san didn’t say anything particularly strange yesterday.

Then, Kaa-san opened her mouth as she was reminded about the thing that happened yesterday.

“Yes, and then your condition turned worse. Sorry for not noticing it, Seiren.”

“No, the one who should apologize is me. Tou-san, Kaa-san, I’m sorry. With the circumstances being like that, I wasn’t sure whether I should say it or not.”

“...that’s right. If the circumstances have unknown meaning and reason, it isn’t the kind of story you would want to spread too much.”

My father had a complicated expression on his face. After all, it might turn into a totally meaningless story, or it might turn into a big trouble. At the very least, I think I understood that meaning behind his words.

My mother put her face down as if she was absorbed in a deep thought. I think she's listening attentively as she observes everyone's reaction.

Taiga-san whose expression was a similar thinking expression raised his face and said, "Understood." Ah, his face is showing a resolute expression now.

"I think I will try to investigate the things here. At the very least, it's because only I can investigate the stories that are inside Shikino family."

What?

Ah, no, obviously we'll be saved if he helped us investigate it. However, if it was found out, then wouldn't the situation be bad? It's the risk for us, members of the Shiiya household, but if it becomes a serious matter, then the one who'll be put in the most dangerous situation would be Taiga-san himself.

"Is that all right?"

"For sharing this conversation with me means that you trust me even a little bit, right? I have to repay your trust, as a person who's going to succeed the Shikino family."

Towards my question which only consisted of a few words, he answered it clearly. Ah well, certainly if I don't trust you, then I won't disclose this thing with you. Still, I wonder if it's really okay? Although this is just my excessive self-consciousness if I don't have anything to reward his story earlier. Even so, well...

"...I'm sorry. Although this is my personal matter."

"No. If nothing will happen, then it's good. But if something were to happen... well, let's deal with it at that time."

Taiga-san smiled as if it was a matter of course, and I don't know whether or not he knew that I was thinking about it.

After arriving at the graveyard village's entrance, Taiga-san rode in a separate carriage. When we started to move, Tou-san suddenly opened his mouth.

"Seiren. The person who raised you... was he a person from the world in

which you grew up?”

“Yes. He is also the one who named me Seiren from the embroidery in the clothes I wore when I was a baby. One of the letters used in the other world was similar to this world’s letters, that was how he could read it as Seiren.”

“I see...”

Hearing my answer, he thought about it for a little while. Then, my father moved his line of sight towards my mother, who was sitting next to me.

“Maya.”

“Yes?”

“Have you ever met Touka-dono?”

Oh my?

It’s about Touya-san’s little brother, Touka-san? Well, certainly he is quite weird based on Taiga-san’s story just now.

However, since my mother was Shikino family’s neighbor, I thought that she would have met him at least several times.

“...Only about one or two times. Since it had been officially decided that the successor of the Shikino family at that time would be Touya-dono, and to avoid any future dispute, he was protected in another distant villa.”

“Protected, was it?”

Saryuu asked in his curiosity. Ah well, I also thought of that, too.

Ah, but that was also the case, huh? It was something about how they wanted to isolate him because they didn’t want the family trouble to turn into something big, right?

“Well, there were lots of things going around. It was a story that I heard from someone else, but Touya-dono and Touka-dono were brothers separated by only a few weeks.”

My mother gave such an evasive answer, but that might be true. The child born later was the legal wife’s child, so it would certainly be a material to bring about future family troubles.

“But, I felt like the Touka-dono I met seemed to resemble Touya-dono very much. It was a talk of 40 years before, though, so I couldn’t really remember it well.”

“Is that so...? Fumu.”

Father, who listened attentively to her words until its very end, nodded as if he was agreeing with something.

Or rather, it won’t be so strange for siblings to resemble one another. Even when their mothers were different, half of their genetics was the same, after all.

While thinking about it, my father looked at me again.

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“Seiren, have you told this to another person?”

“I have told this to Saryuu, Minoa-san, Oriza-san, and then Kuon-sensei who passed it to Jigen-san. Only to them.”

“Since Kanna accompanied me, there’s a probability that she heard about it, too.”

“Fumu. Then, let’s leave the investigation on our side to Jigen.”

After I answered, Saryuu added. After hearing us, my father concluded this case in a simple approach. Jigen-san can be greatly relied on, huh? Well, since he has done such a great feat as bringing me back from the other world.

My mother seemed to agree with that conclusion, as she nodded and looked at us sternly.

“That’s right. Seiren and Saryuu too, you can’t let this talk get to the public.”

“Yes, I understand.”

“Yeah, of course.”

That's a given. There's no way I can let this kind of story to be distributed to other people more than this.

In the first place, just how many people will believe the kind of story that involves things such as the other world?

I get the feeling that it was a crucial matter when I talked to my father and Taiga-san about it.

"Come to think about it, Tou-san. What happened to the magician who disappeared at the same time as my disappearance?"

I tried asking as it made me curious. Then, my parents exchanged glances at each other. Ah, something happened, huh, certainly?

"Well, normally he would be suspected as the criminals who kidnapped you. However, that suspicion was quickly cleared up. At that time, though..."

"Eh?"

"That night, we discovered something. At the back of the mansion, there was some trails of blood."

"That he was unable to protect you... written in blood..."

Both my parents stopped talking at that point. However, after listening to their words, I could understand what happened afterward without thinking.

I see, he died, huh? The magician. Based on the situation, I thought that I really couldn't do anything about it.

Based on how my mother spoke, perhaps the crime scene wasn't shown to her, as it was barely one month after she gave birth to me. No, even without it being shown to her, the damage had been done.

However, since I went to the other world, the possibility that the magician did something else was brought back again.

Perhaps father's [At that time] was referring to it.

Even so.

Still...

The magician who died after leaving the writing of how he was unable to

protect me.

I wonder if I managed to stay alive at the price of that person's life?

Change 45: It Arrived, the Wax-Sealed Letter

A few days afterward. We passed the time nonchalantly by going to hike at the grasslands, secretly going out to shop in the village, and so on.

Nah really, it was all because my father said to leave the investigation to Jigen-san who stayed behind in the mansion, and in the first place, if we were to seclude ourselves and didn't come out of the villa, then it would be more suspicious. Well, we are certainly a rich family who came here to enjoy the summer holiday fully, on the pretext of Obon Festival.

So, today marked the day before when we would be returning home to the mansion. Just like how it was when we went here, returning home would naturally be a task to do for one day, so today was the last day we could leisurely enjoy our time here.

The conversation that we had during when we ate the breakfast leisurely was also a normal family conversation to the end. After all, there's no way we could afford to let Godou-san find out about it. No matter how much he has been working for my mother, it's still not possible.

"Tomorrow, we will finally return home to the mansion. Somehow, I feel quite reluctant to part from this villa."

"That's right. But still, there's no way we can stay here for as long as we like, especially Tou-san."

"Hahaha, well, yeah. Once we returned, there will surely be some tasks put in order by Yuzuruha that's already forming a huge pile. I need to work hard as a feudal lord, right?"

"Oh my, oh my. If it's the tasks put in order by Yuzuruha-san, then wouldn't they only require your signature?"

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When my mother said it bluntly like that, my father was at loss for words and only muttered, “Ugh...”. Oi oi, isn’t it a serious matter?”

“Tou-sama, if possible, I would like you to deny it, but...”

“Impossible, Saryuu. Since it’s the truth.”

My mother declared it nonchalantly as she quickly cut into Saryuu’s words. No, no, no matter if Godou-san was here, it was still useless. Should I try to help him?

“...At the very least, wouldn’t there be any tasks requiring you to read some documents left?”

“Seiren... you’re just like Maya, saying something so formidable.”

...Huh?

Me, just like Kaa-san?

Or rather, could it be that the conversation should have stopped before this?

“Ah, Seiren. You can’t apologize here. Since it will just become the final blow.”

“...Ah, yes.”

Before I could apologize, Kaa-san stopped me. I see, so it’s no good.

Uu, am I that similar to Kaa-san-? Well, we are mother and daughter, after all, but still-.

In front of me who was still thinking about it, Tou-san who finally recovered in one way or another, tightened his expression and turned to me.

“...That’s right. Seiren. I don’t want to be lecturing you, but can I tell you something just in case?”

“Yes?”

“Touya-dono has asked for marriage talks with Taiga-dono. I have replied him that I would like to keep my daughter with me a little while longer.”

“Huh?”

By marriage talks, to put it simply, you're telling me not to marry Taiga-san, right?

No, first of all, I don't feel like it, since I am still a man inside. And I still have no clue when I will be a woman inside, too, perhaps I should say it like that?

Well, my inside is bursting with gratitude towards my simple and doting father at this moment. Yes.

"T, thank you. As for me, I also would like to spend my time in the Shiiya residence at least until the spring next year."

"That's right. Since you've finally returned home, I also would like to be together with you for at least one year."

My mother also has the same opinion. That's obvious, since I'm her own child who finally returned after spending 18 years looking for me.

"Seiren-sama."

When breakfast was over and I just left the dining room, Godou-san called me.

"A letter (fumi) addressed to you has just arrived, so I'll be handing it over to you. Here you are."

"Fumi? Ah, thank you very much."

When I thought about it for a while, ah I see, so it was a letter. After I received it and thanked him, I saw my name was written on top of the lovely white envelope. Whoa, this person, his writing is neat. As for me, it's been 3 months ever since I began learning the alphabets, but my writing was still so-so. Minoa-san and Oriza-san glanced at me from both sides, and I understand their intention. Yes yes, even I'm also curious about the sender. Yes.

When I turned the back over, there was a wax seal on it. Perhaps there would be the sender's name written right below it. Uhm... Shikino, Taiga?

Related image



An illustration on a wax-sealed letter and the sender’s name below it can be seen in this image.

“...It’s from Taiga-san.”

“It’s from Taiga-sama?”

“That’s what it looks like. Don’t you agree?”

“Ah, yes, I agree.”

I asked two people to confirm it, but it doesn’t seem to be mistaken. I hope I will be able to read it moderately smoothly, since I couldn’t read the book I borrowed from my father.

Putting that aside, let see.

When I thought of the circumstances in the past, the fact that Taiga-san wrote me a letter might have some relation to how he said he would investigate things. If that's the case, then Minoa-san, Oriza-san, and my brains alone won't be enough. Probably.

"...Minoa-san. Please call Kuon-sensei over to the room. Tell her that I have received a letter from Taiga-san."

"I will call her immediately."

After sending off Minoa-san who went out of the room immediately, for the time being, Oriza-san and I returned back inside the room.

"If you're at a loss, please just follow me first. Uhm..."

After Kuon-sensei came, we properly opened Taiga-san's letter. While I could generally read it, I read it after having some doubtful parts here and there checked by Kuon-sensei. There were some parts that used difficult words that were rarely used, nobles are so troublesome, oy.

But well, to say it rudely, the Shikino household is full of suspicious things.

Like how the day that Touya-san's mother and Touka-san's mother respectively passed away was only a few days apart.

To begin with, it was also at the same period when the employees who worked at the Shikino household were replaced, and the amount of money sent to the employees who stopped as a retirement money was amazingly abundant, it was not a laughing joke.

Wouldn't it be seriously bad for Taiga-san if he were to be caught during investigating something like this? Or did I watch too many historical dramas?

"...This is really bad, huh?"

"Because it's about Taiga-sama, I think that he was investigating it very carefully."

Kuon-sensei said that, but at any rate, since we are an outsider to his family, then we can't carelessly meddle in their affairs. If something bad were to happen to Taiga-san with this, then... it would be my fault.

Aah stop, stop, I can't start to think about that kind of thing right now. First of all, let's start with the information in front of me.

"How should I put it, the story about Touka-san, wasn't it a story from 30 years ago? Would it be something that can easily be known?"

"Each feudal lord's house has an account book that's passed from generation to generation. At the very least, I heard that there remained the one from when Shiiya's residence was in this residence. With all due respect, that's the thing that should be investigated."

The one who answered my question was Minoa-san. I see, so there is such a thing. If it was continued ever since the olden times, then it would mean that it recorded the house's history.

Hm. Ah, by any chance...

"Could it be that account book contained some memos instead of journal?"

"So that kind of thing is still the same no matter in which world it is. Master has ever said before that he was spared the trouble thanks to the memo left in the notes."

"Ah-, which reminds me, I heard that when they needed to look for something important for a festival in a certain year, they turned over the pages of the account book to find it the last time."

As expected-. I know that the orphanage director also had the institution's account book—or more precisely a household account book, and he wrote in some memos about a fraction of what happened at that day in that note.

...The orphanage director, huh? I wonder what is he doing in the other world as the person who shared the same name, sama face, and same voice with someone else in this world?

"At any rate, would it be written in a place where it could be found out once we checked it? I understand if there's some sort of secret accounts and the likes."

I said that without thinking. In detective dramas, the things that can't be let out to public office are usually written in a secret account separately from the

account book, and that it's usually saved in a safe box, that sort of thing, right? I wonder if there's no such thing here.

"Could it be about documents that can't be put on the surface? Basically, the account book passed down to each feudal lord can only be read by the feudal lord and his butler."

"Ah-, so it should be safe as it can only be seen by the top management and their trusted retainer, right? Since Taiga-san is the next feudal lord, I wonder what will happen if he wants to try seeing it?"

If Kuon-sensei's words can be trusted, then unexpectedly, it seemed to be something within his position. Even if there's roughly a probability that it's kept in the safe box, in any case, the one who examined it was Taiga-san, the successor.

Ah-could it be, there is such a thing inside father's private room that I can't enter? So, that's the reason.

Well then. Despite the fact that he has retrieved the information with much trouble, we still have nothing on our side.

Since I have practiced writing, then there should be no problem in writing letters.

"Nn, for now, I should reply, huh. Kuon-sensei, Minoa-san, Oriza-san, can I please trouble you by checking it afterwards?"

"Eh? Ah, do you mean the content of the letter?"

"There's that too, but mainly the spelling. Since it will be given to someone else, I'll be embarrassed if I made some mistakes."

"Understood-. If that's the case, then please leave it to me-"

Oriza-san said, "Ehhen!" and puffed up her chest. As a matter of fact, she seemed to be the fastest among the three to master the plain magic language. In other words, language and composition is unexpectedly her field of expertise.

"Then, I will turn to give my support. What about Minoa-san?"

"I, I will leave it to the two of you, then!"

When Kuon-sensei brought up the subject with a wide smile, Minoa-san quickly shook her head. She can't be called as a muscle-head, but I can tell that she prefers to move her body around rather than reading books. At the same time, she also seemed to like putting my hair together, she's fairly adorable.

Alica-san who's taking her days off right now is relatively a typical of maids in general. She could do her job quickly, and she's also smart. It's a relief to be right beside her, since it feels like she could handle everything flawlessly.

Once we return to the mansion, I will properly convey the information about the things happening here. I think that she will surely be able to be helpful.

Thinking of the worst scenario that the content might be read by someone else other than Taiga-san, I kept a safe content for my answer. It's something that could give off the feelings of, *'thanks for the interesting talk, I had fun, please let me know if there's another opportunity to have something like that again.'* Afterward, I also touched a little about Touya-san's marriage talks.

"The content is passable. However, if one's reading too much into it, it can be taken as a love letter, yeah."

"Eh? Did I write something like that?"

I panicked at what Kuon-sensei pointed out. No, I didn't intend to write it like that. Ah-, but if you read it like that, I think it's also fine. I do not particularly dislike Taiga-san.

(T/N: Seiren just raised a flag!!!)

"It feels like it can raise someone's hopes a bit. I understand that you're worried for Taiga-sama, though."

"Seiren-sama, that's a nice way to put it-. Ah, the spelling is also okay. Since Kuon-sensei has been teaching you, please have more confidence."

Minoa-san put her hands on her cheeks as if she was troubled and lightly sighed. Oriza-san finished checking the whole passage as if she was having fun. Nah, what they said is right. I've gotten used to writing the alphabets gradually, but after looking at Taiga-san's letter, well...

"Ah-, yes. No, well, I mean, it's because Taiga-san's writing is pretty."

“Seiren-sama’s writing is also easy to read. If it’s written way too skillfully, then it might have the opposite effect and becomes hard to read, you know-?”

“Aah, I can somehow understand that.”

It was not only me who reflexively nodded at Oriza-san’s line. No, actually, Kaya-san’s writing was too skillful that there were some notes that can’t be read. Since my mother’s the one reading it, I wonder if she could decipher it.

Among the necessary luggage that Minoa-san and the others tossed in, there was a set of wax for my personal use.

Just like Taiga-san’s letter, after we closed and glued the letter, the melted wax is to be poured over on top of it, and then a seal is pressed on top of the wax. I think it’s applied so that nobody else will read the letter in the middle of the delivery.

I lit up a candle and melt the red wax. I dropped a plop of it on top of the closed envelope and quickly pushed down the seal. Also, when you remove the seal, there’s a mark resembling my name there.

<https://ae01.alicdn.com/kf/HTB1qMjiXh9YBuNjy0Ffq6xIsVXaq.jpg>

The seal and how it's pressed on the melted wax to create the wax seal.

"Done. Is this okay?"

"Yes, you've done well."

Kuon-sensei, thank you for praising me honestly. Since it's my first time, I was quite nervous for doing something like this.

"Uh-m, to send it to Taiga-san... I wonder if it's alright by giving it to Godou-san?"

"Ah, I will take it out. There should be a proper postal service even in this kind of village."

I passed it over to Minoa-san and nodded in agreement, “that seemed to be the case.”

Normally, people don’t use snakes like Kuon-sensei when they want to deliver letters. If we were in the mansion, then we would have the employees to pass the letter to the postal service downtown, and we will ask them to deliver it after paying them. During busy time, there might be an extra charge or there’s a contingency fee that we have to pay during the time when a receipt confirmation is necessary.

“Then, please do so.”

“I’m off!”

After I asked her as I gave some sum of money along with the envelope, Minoa-san lowered her head deeply and went out of the room. It’s fine if she wants to buy something else if there’s any change, but I wonder if it’s possible?

Change 46: Farewell, Villa in the Mountain

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Well then, the last day finally arrived.

Today, we would be returning by the carriages from the morning, so the employees were working hard to load the luggage. Most of the luggage had been collected by last night, but since there were small things left behind, in the end the preparations were still ongoing noisily until the very last minute.

Apart from that, my family had a leisure breakfast. No, it wasn’t that leisure. I still had to pack my luggage too, so I should spare some time. If you wanted to say that it was just an excuse, then say it, since it was the truth.

And, as I ate this morning’s salad, I thought of something. There was cheese in its content, but it somehow felt refreshing. This isn’t Godou-san’s cheese, right?

“This cheese, could it be Gadou-san’s, perhaps?”

When I spontaneously tried to ask Godou-san, he nodded deeply and said, “Yes.”

“I heard that Seiren-sama prefers my brother’s cheese. If that’s the case, I decided to use it today as it is the last day.”

“I’m sorry, and thank you very much.”

Whoaa. I think he knows that Saryuu loves Godou-san’s cheese, but despite that, he decided to match it up for me? I’m so happy.

Ah, but the cream soup’s taste is...

“Of course, I also used my own cheese.”

“Yeah, in this soup, right?”

“As one would expect.”

See. When I drank the soup, I clearly felt the slight difference between the cheeses. I also know that this is Godou-san’s cheese.

Saryuu seemed to understand it as well, and he had been taking another cup of the soup ever since some time ago.

“As I expected, Godou’s cheese is delicious. Actually, I want this to be made even in our house, but the taste will turn out different than the one made here, right?”

“Yes, that is right. Because the [henchman] who’s making the cheese will also be different.”

‘Hahaha,’ Godou-san laughed as if he was having fun and his expression was so boastful, and he looked somehow reliable this way.

The henchman that he spoke of in this case is the bacteria that worked to make the cheese. It seemed that fermented foods’ taste was affected by the bacteria who worked hard inside of that food. I think that perhaps the people in this world never saw the bacteria, but I wonder how they understood about that kind of thing? I wonder if they have ever seen bacteria by using magic?

Shortly after breakfast ended, it was time for our departure, so by the time we went out to the entranceway, we encountered a familiar face that it felt as if this was arranged in advance. Can I really say this as an encounter?

“Good morning, Seiren-sama, everyone.”

He appeared. The charming prince on a white horse, no, I mean the next feudal lord. Today, he's wearing an indigo blue outfit, and there's a bright-colored stole hanging by his shoulders. Could this person be camouflaged in the sky like this?

"G, good morning, Taiga-san."

"Good morning, Nii-sama."

"Oh my, oh my. Taiga-dono, what's the matter for visiting this early in the morning?"

"I heard that the Shiiya will be going back today, so I came here to send you all off."

Next to me and Saryuu whose face cramped, Kaa-san showed a bright smile. Taiga-san also showed his refreshing smile just as usual. Tou-san who appeared from behind us whispered with a low voice, "Why is he here?" that his voice couldn't be heard clearly. No, even I was wondering about it, too.

Oh-well-, would someone please stand in my shoes? I wonder if his parents have talked about the matter of marriage talks between us to him? For the time being, Tou-san has refused the marriage talks, but the person himself was obviously in high spirits.

"When I think about it, if I'm not wrong, Seiren-sama's a bit weak on riding carriages, right?"

"Y, you remember it well..."

"Yeah. Since it's the details that came out during our first time meeting."

Putting on the pressure, huh, Taiga-san? Well, by this world's standard, remaining a bachelor at 28 years old is considered late, but I wonder if it's okay for you to choose a woman who's a man inside even without you knowing about it?

"I will be escorting you on Genjirou until we reach the village where we first met. Please go on ahead."

"Genjirou?"

"Yeah. It's the name of my horse."

When he decisively said that, instinctively fell over on the inside.

Isn't the naming sense for animals of people in this world amazing? Like Gonzou or Genjirou.

Putting that aside, I'll be saved by riding on a horse until halfway of our route. Perhaps if I were to return by riding a carriage all the way, by the time I arrived at the mansion, it seemed like I would have no hope of recovery.

Oh well, with me riding on the horse in front of Taiga-san, we departed from the villa. I waved my hands from the top of the horse towards Godou-san who sent us off while saying, "Please do come here again-!"

Ah, today, I didn't sit with one of my legs out to one side, I properly straddled the front half of my body to the saddle. As one would expect from sitting with one leg out to the side, the stability would be bad. And if I were to cling to Taiga-san the whole time, it would definitely hinder him.

I have never tried riding a horse either in this world or in the other world, but for the time being, I firmly put my legs on each side of the horse's side and assumed a straight body posture. Yeah, it seemed to be fine this way.

"Seiren-sama. If your body feels too tense, please don't hesitate and lean on me."

"Haha. If I feel like that, then I will do it."

I didn't bother to think whether Taiga-san's words when we were riding the horse were just a frivolous talk or a serious talk.

On top of Genjirou who was steadily advancing, suddenly Taiga-san started a conversation with me.

"Thank you for your letter. Also, thank you very much for your concern."

"Eh, ah, haa. I'm glad that it was delivered safely."

"Yeah. For now, please be rest assured as I am completely alright."

"Yeah."

Thanks for reading at convallariaslibrary $d \otimes t \subset m$

I pondered for a moment about the meaning behind his words [I'm completely alright]. However, since this conversation started off from how he has read the letter, I understood the meaning of it.

"That's what was written in the letter, right? When my father learned that I received a letter from you, he lightly teased me that it was a love letter."

"...Yes."

That is, well.

No matter how the circumstances were perceived, we couldn't afford Touya-

san finding out how his son and another feudal lord's daughter were digging up on his household's past matters.

However, let me make a comment: could it be true that my letter was mistakenly read as a love letter? Uhm, I should be more careful about my wording next time.

Besides that.

"That, wouldn't it really be a big problem for the Shikino family if things didn't go well? That's why, I thought that it was totally dangerous, after all."

"Please be at ease. If it's really the Shikino's problem, then it's all the more reason that I need to correct that as the next period's successor."

Even if I couldn't see Taiga-san's face as he decisively declared it, but that person's chest which was right on my back felt warm and it seemed to be facing forward.

This person is someone who's going to pursue the path he's aiming for straight ahead. He's quite clumsy, and for some reason, it seemed like he couldn't be left alone because of it.

Nn-.

Wait, for me to be thinking of something like this, isn't it awful?

"That's right, Seiren-sama."

The one who pulled my consciousness back from immersing in my thought about what was awful was Taiga-san who called my name as if it was natural. Genjirou continued to walk alongside the carriage as if it felt uninvolved by us.

...If one were to look at us, would it be possible that they thought of us as a lovey dovey couple riding on a horse?

"I have heard about our marriage talks from my father, but I respect Seiren-sama's feelings. If possible, I will be happy if you are willing to come and talk about it."

I felt shocked for a moment when that matter was brought up at this time.

No, well. Regardless of gender and the various circumstances, when you were

told that the other party would be happy if you were to come, then wouldn't you feel happy too, nonetheless?

...Yup. What I thought was quite awful from before, could it be this? I wonder if my way of thinking or any other aspects have become a female's?

I'm not aware of it myself. No, if I were aware of it in the first place, then I would be even more troubled, perhaps.

However, I still don't want to be separated. From my father, my mother, and my younger brother.

After all, it has barely been 3 months ever since we met again.

"Ah-... That, since I've finally returned to living along in my parents' home, I think that it would be nice if we can spend time as parents and daughter for about one year... I'm sorry."

That's why, I replied with those words. This, I wonder if this could be counted as something that can raise someone's hopes?

"No. Now that you mention it, that's right. I apologize for not considering your feelings and your parents' feelings."

With a rustling voice, I could tell that Taiga-san seemed to be shaking his head. I felt somehow guilty when I listened to his voice who sounded like he truly thought of himself at fault.

After I pulled myself together, I decided to try and tell him about the circumstances around here. Although I might say that it's like I nearly didn't have any clue about everything until I'm home.

"Uhm, it's about our earlier talk. For our side, our magician, Jigen-san will be investigating things at the mansion. If we find something out, I'll make sure to collect and report the information."

"Yeah, I'll be waiting for it. If possible, I'd like it to be legible, like your writing."

"Buu-"

Ah-, Taiga-san hasn't given up at all. In short, he wants another letter from me, right?

Well, if it's only that, then... After all, I'm also receiving the information from him.

"I, I understand. Uhm, is my writing that easy to read?"

"Yes, very."

"...I'm glad, then."

Ah-, somehow I felt relieved.

After trying so hard to remember this world's alphabets for around 3 months, I will definitely feel down if I were told that my writing is illegible. To put simply, that would mean that my writing is messy.

The other world's alphabets are... Aah yup, as expected I can say that they are quite legible, too. I mean, I don't have any kind of tendency, but there have been occasions where I was told that my writing resembled a textbook or printed text's. The alphabets are naturally different, but the impressions on how they're written and read are quite the same.

So, when we went for a break, in other words, at the village where Taiga-san descended from the sky, as expected, we took a break and grab our lunches. Since Taiga-san would only escort me up to this point, I'm going to return by the carriage together with everyone else after this.

"Well then, I will excuse myself here. If I have the opportunity to visit the Shiiya residence, I'll be looking forward to meeting everyone there again at that time."

"Umu, we will be ready and waiting for you then, Taiga-dono."

Towards the good young man who nonchalantly greeted him, my father looked as if he was preparing for a war no matter from which angle you looked at him. No, his face was smiling, but somehow, such was the aura emitted from his whole body.

Stop it, my doting father! If only I was a male, I'd surely thrust in that comment right here. In that case, then the other party wouldn't be my father, but the orphanage director, though.

We sent off Taiga-san who got on Genjirou and gallantly soared up to the sky

until the moment we could no longer see his figure. Saryuu, who stood next to me as he looked up at the sky just like me, lightly poked his elbow at me.

“Uhm, Ane-sama.”

“Hm, what’s it, Saryuu?”

“That, could it be, about Nii-sama...”

“...ah-.”

Well, it’s a matter concerning his stepsister and his biological elder brother, after all. I think that it won’t be weird for him to get curious, so I decided to speak my honest thoughts. Since he’s the younger brother, so I can say it, right?

“I don’t really understand, but I didn’t get any bad feeling from riding the horse together with him. That’s why, perhaps, about such a thing... He doesn’t seem like a bad guy.”

“...Is that so?”

Wait, Saryuu. Why are you looking so down? I’m more or less still your elder sister, you know?

Do you have that severe of a sister complex?

Change 47: Welcome Home and Night Chat in My Room

In the evening, around when the sunlight turned red, our carriages finally arrived at the mansion. Unlike when we departed, perhaps because I was already accustomed to it, I didn’t feel so nauseated. Ah-thank goodness, I felt so relieved.

Once we reached our own rooms at our fatigued state, we only needed to wait for dinner, but it won’t be the same for the maids. They still had the job to take the luggage down from the wagon immediately, and then they needed to carry the luggage in.

Because I was told not to help them out for many times over, I decided to ask for Yuzuruha-san’s hand to help me come down from the carriage instead, since

he had been waiting at the entranceway.

“Welcome back, everyone. Did you enjoy your summer in the villa?”

“I’m home-. It was really fun, the horses and the goats were very cute.”

“T-they were cute, indeed, right...”

“Yeah, they were adorable. Especially the small-sized horses.”

“Isn’t that right? They were readily tame towards Seiren.”

Hey, Saryuu, it’s fine for you not to be in the same opinion as me, don’t be so unreasonable. Especially about the horses. Even father and mother were astonished.

“Saryuu-sama. Has it been a little beat easier for you to be close to the horses?”

“N—”

Look, even Yuzuruha-san found out about it. He said his comments even without letting go of the smile on his face.

As for my parents, their expressions turned as they muttered, “Aaah.” Unexpectedly, this might turn out to be an established habit in the future.

Well, shall I intervene here? As one would expect, he’d feel bitter from being nudged by them, just like how people became bitter after being bitten by a dog. If you experience it yourself, obviously it’d be scary.

“Well, well. I think that there’s no problem even if he didn’t get close to the horses, he still has another chance to try it again, right?”

“Yes, that’s right! You’re such a bully, Yuzuruha!”

“Oh my, please excuse me for being rude, then.”

Yuzuruha calmly lowered his head to Saryuu who hastily followed my words’ lead.

...Saryuu, will you be able to grow up to be a proper man just like Taiga-san 14 years from now on?

After all, it’s quite convenient to fly around your territory while riding on a

horse like that.

I wonder why did Taiga-san's name pop out there, hey, me?

Was it because I was together with him up until this afternoon?

In any case, since the thing about the luggage had been settled to an extent, each of us went inside our own rooms. Obviously, I was together with Minoa-san and Oriza-san. Kuon-sensei returned to the house where Jigen-san was waiting.

Anyway, it's been a week since I last entered my own room, so I felt quite nostalgic.

"Ah, Seiren-sama. Welcome home!"

"I'm home-!"

The one who opened the basket that contained my luggage inside my own room was Alica-san who had returned home during the period of Purification Summer.

Whoa-, I have forgotten that this is the kind of feeling I get from saying "Welcome home" and "I'm home".

Yes, that's it, speaking of I'm home.

"Ah, Alica-san, too, welcome back. You went to visit your parents, right?"

"Ah, yes, I'm back. I needed to clean up Seiren-sama's room and do other things, so I returned this morning."

Alica-san closed the basket's lid and bowed her head. In other words, during the time we rode on our carriages to return home, Alica-san and the other employees who remained in the mansion worked hard to do cleaning up and other things, huh?

"Whoa, is that so? Since the mansion's been left empty for a week, right? Thank you."

"Don't mention it, since it's my job, after all."

Well, work is certainly work, but it's quite natural for me to express my gratitude to her for cleaning up my room.

It seems that my habit has infected Saryuu, since recently, Kanna-san and Maki-san often looked surprised. Well, it was obvious since he was originally born and raised in houses that used employees as common norm. They also didn't feel like they were forced to do their work.

"By the way, is Seiren-sama's luggage just this?"

"It has been increased, though."

Minoa-san shrugged her shoulders as she answered Alica-san who tilted her head in front of just one basket.

Just as Minoa-san said, she and Oriza-san has tossed various things into my luggage. Among them was the wax seal set that unexpectedly turned out to be handy.

Oh my, oh my, Alica-san was obviously surprised because it wasn't weird for me to have around 5 to 6 baskets of luggage just like my parents and Saryuu. I wonder just what kind of things were stuffed into those baskets.

"Well, the clothes are thin because it's summer. But were they sufficient?"

"It's enough, it's enough. The underwears were washed and used again, and they got dry quickly because it's summer."

"Seiren-sama is such an economist, huh-"

"That's because I had been raised in an ordinary house. Ah, Oriza-san, thank you for washing my underwear."

It's nothing, don't mention it-. It's certainly way tidier than having to wash them all at once."

Just as Oriza-san said, I was oddly economist because I grew up in that kind of house, so it was no wonder. The one who washed my underwear was Oriza-san, though.

At first, I thought of washing it myself, but Oriza-san volunteered as she wouldn't let me do so. If it was Minoa-san, the cloth might be damaged if she put too much force during washing.

Alica-san suddenly clapped her hands together while she was in the middle of efficiently tidying up my luggage. She seemed to remember something, and

then she turned her gaze towards me.

“That’s right. I have brought Cheria fruits as my souvenir from home. It’s being cooled down in the kitchen, so please enjoy them after dinner.”

“Eh, really?”

As soon as that topic was brought up, everyone’s expressions including me suddenly became bright.

Cheria fruits, in other words, cherries. Even here, there are different places where different types of trees grow, but it seems that the golden age for that fruit is around the end of the Summer of Purification.

The seasonal fruit is so delicious. Delicious things are justice. Therefore, the Cheria fruits that I’m going to eat are justice in itself.

...As I thought, I really have turned into a real woman, haven’t I? I suppose it’s a reaction that’s becoming more similar to the maids.

After dinner was over, Alica-san brought in a container containing the Cheria fruits. This seems to be a variety that doesn’t have any seeds and it’s popular for it’s easy to be eaten. Well, it won’t be good for the seeds to be flying around in this kind of a room.

While eating the fruits, we began to explain the circumstances that happened at the villa to Alica-san. Since she was also accompanying me, it would be bad if something were to happen to her from now on. Of course, I omitted out the details about how I was raised as a man in the other world, though.

“Well... It is indeed bad, Seiren-sama.”

Alica-san listened to our story one by one, and then she stated her current impression.

“Yes, well. ...and where would that danger arrive to, Alica-san?”

“Eh, ah, I think it’s mainly Shikino’s young master. Excuse me.”

“That is certainly quite bad, too, though.”

Well, we could avoid touching about the past and hid behind the scenes, but the one who’s to be at the most risk would be Taiga-san, huh. No well, how

could he show his good will to that extent, huh? ...No, if one were to look at it as an outsider, it wouldn't be so strange to call him as a stalker, right? Let's be careful.

"As expected, was it better for us to throw a basket at him?"

"We shouldn't strike him, so let's stop at it, okay?"

Perhaps Minoa-san's reaction was more normal. As expected, throwing a basket at him would be going too far, and if it hit him by any chance, it might turn out to be a problem.

Well, the conversation's gone astray. Let's bring it back to the original topic.

"Oh well, that's why, it might become quite a risky investigation. I repeat, please be careful. I'm saying this to everyone."

"Of course, we'll be careful. However, Seiren-sama should also be careful, okay? The current head of the Shikino family seems to be unable to forget our Madam even up until this time."

"What?"

When Alica-san mentioned that thing, I was stunned for a moment. It's likely that it might look that way from the outside.

"No, Touya-san lost in the match against Tou-san, or to put it frankly, Kaa-san rejecte—...Ah-."

There's that thing where someone will still continue to like their crush even after they've been rejected. Yup.

Then, it's understandable for them to have a wishful thinking like, perhaps I still have some chances.

However, that was something from a long time ago.

In addition, Touya-san already has sons, namely Taiga-san and Saryuu. In other words, he already had a wife.

"No, well, it will be easy if he has forgotten. But, the reality isn't as easy as that."

"When Saryuu-sama was welcomed as this family's adopted child, I heard a

talk about how he seemed to be greatly happy.”

“Well, we can certainly connect the story.”

Minoa-san said with a low voice. Aah-ah-ah-, my son has become the son of the woman I loved in the past.

No, I understand, but at the same time, I can't understand how one could be that persistent to that point?

“...Yuzuruha-san has often said this, too, but... It's about how Seiren-sama closely resembles the Madam back in her younger days.”

Oriza-san's words dealt the final blow in a sense, and I shoved the cherries in my mouth to go down to my throat.

Chapter 48: The Important Physical Evidence

Alica-san's expression turned dark all of a sudden. I thought that it was only an impression that came because she hung her head down or something like that, but still...

"Alica-san, what's wrong?"

"...Uhm. This is just a rumour, but..."

When I asked her, Alica-san timidly answered. Hmm, what rumour is it? I'm curious.

"It's about how Taiga-sama and Saryuu-sama's wide age gap was actually like that in order to put Saryuu up to be Shiiya family's adopted son."

What?

"What's with that rumour?"

"It seems to be a rumour that's been spreading in the territory of the Shikino family as if it's the truth. At the very least, the fact about how Touya-sama liked Maya-sama seemed to have become a well-known fact especially among old citizens within the fief's population."

Really, what the hell is up with that?

About how Saryuu is actually the child that Touya-san made so that he could come to our household. So that his own son could become my mother's son. No, what's with that theory, I can't really comprehend it.

Let me see...

Saryuu is 4 years younger than me, in other words, he was born 4 years after my disappearance.

It was known by public that I was [the feeble daughter that was recuperating in the countryside and couldn't come in public], and because I couldn't succeed the house with my condition, my parents welcomed Saryuu as their adopted child. While in truth, because I went missing, the Shiiya family had no successor, though.

What if...

What if that went as what Touya-san had expected, then...

“...That, did you talk about it to someone else?”

“No, I haven’t.”

This time, Alica-san answered me with a full certainty. She also shook her head firmly.

“Such a thing, it’s not like I can say it out loud even if my mouth is torn, right?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I have a sword with me, so it won’t be weird if this were to turn into a bloody event about this time, you know?”

“I’m so sorry!”

Towards Alica-san who quickly lowered her head, I decided to stop things here. No, as expected, I might have gone too far this time. I got the wrong target of my anger.

In the first place, the one who made that statement wasn’t Alica-san herself. She only heard that rumour from somewhere else. And that rumour was created because there was some suspicion to the Shikino family in regard to the incident of my disappearance.

...But well, Taiga-san and Saryuu, their age gap of 14 years is really so wide. That rumour about how Touya-san was someone who didn’t possess any good will wasn’t that strange, too. Although it was more like a slander.

“Anyway, Alica-san. Where did you hear that rumour?”

“Eh?”

“There is a proverb in the place where I grew up, that there’s no smoke without fire.”

“...Is it about how there ought to be a reasonable reason as to why that rumour came to rise?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

Thanks to Minoa-san’s interjection, I managed to collect myself once more. I realized that there was one more person in this place other than Alica-san and I. At the very least, it was the truth that Saryuu had become our family’s adopted child. At that time, apparently Touya-san was pleased.

But was he pleased because Saryuu became our family’s adopted child, or was it because he became [my mother’s child]? Well, because he became related to our family, he also became somehow related to my mother, that kind of thing,

huh? If it was because of the latter, then if things didn't go well, he'd be branded as a stalker, oy.

Because we are people of the Shiiya household, we don't know what kind of thing is happening in the territory of Shikino family. However, if that kind of rumour managed to leak out from the inside, then it could become an information for us.

Even if they said that it was a lie, people would still wonder if that could possibly be the truth, right?

“Uhm. My family works as a farmer, but since our house was close to the Shikino family's territory, they went to sell things there. And then, my parents told me that they talked about it with their acquaintance that didn't want their identity to be disclosed.”

“Ah-. And then, the rumour was handed down to Alica-san who worked in the Shiiya family, huh. ...I see.”

It was leaked from the inside, and it was easy to see how it could happen. It was a story that became relatively known in the territory of the Shikino family. I didn't believe that Taiga-san could be so careless as to leak that kind of thing out, so the origin of the rumour might be around Touya-san, huh. No, but if that was the case, it won't be good if they didn't remain tight-lipped, right?

Or perhaps I should say, stop making fun of my little brother. Damn it, the one who's responsible for spreading this weird rumour, I hope you'll remember this. As his older sister or older brother, at the very least, it seems that I have developed a brocon.

Knock knock, the sound of a knocking could be heard. Before Alica-san could react, Minoa-san had already headed towards the door. After a while, Minoa-san turned around at us.

“Seiren-sama. Jigen-sama has come to visit you, would that be all right?”

“Jigen-san?”

Eh, at this time of the day, huh. I was taking a short rest right after dinner, but isn't it around the time when the elders should be sleeping already?

I was thinking that since it might be a talk about the investigation and since it was already late, he could have come tomorrow.

“Let him come inside. Alica-san, can you prepare the tea?”

“Ah, yes. I will quickly prepare it.”

There was only one job that I could give to Alica-san in order to pull herself together after that talk. After sending off her back, I turned over to face Jigen-san who came along under Minoa-san’s guidance.

“Excuse me for disturbing you this late, Seiren-sama.”

“Ah, no problem. Since it’s this late, I thought that it would be fine even if you were to visit me tomorrow. Is it also fine for you to visit me this late?”

I stood up and gave my thanks. But still, magicians didn’t really change their outfits even when it was summer, huh? When I took a closer look, the fabric became slightly thinner, but as expected, there was still a long robe that accompanied it.

“Hohoho. What, it’s not like I will lose against young ones like you. At least until I could see my great-grandchild’s wedding, I won’t lose out and meet the God of the Sun.”

“For the time being, is Kuon-sensei looking for a husband?”

“I guess so. Because she is my cute and adorable grandchild, I wish that she would meet a good husband by chance, but that doesn’t seem to be that easy.”

Jigen-san who was talking about such a thing while sitting down was unexpectedly a doting grandfather. No, that’s fine, though.

Speaking of which, I don’t know anything about my grandfather and my grandmother. The other day, I only visited the family graveyard. If an opportunity were to come in the future, I would like to listen to my father and my mother’s reminiscent talk about them.

In front of me who was thinking about that thing, Jigen-san suddenly handed over an envelope. I was wondering where he put it, but it seems like it was inside the big sleeve of his robe.

The envelope that came out was—if I were to put it in words that I know—it was the most similar to a brown envelope. At a size around the college’s notebook, it should contain some documents, right? There was a seal with a pattern that resembled the so-called magic square.

“I visited you here because I’d like to give the report of the investigation

progress. Because you seem tired from a one-day journey inside the carriage, I decided to write it in a letter. Please read it carefully along with everyone else tomorrow.”

“I’m sorry, you even had to take that into consideration.”

Whoa, in other words, it’s a letter containing the investigation’s result. I was saved that it arrived just in time.

But I wonder why he’d come all the way to meet me, though... well, I was a man, though. The only ones who know that are me, Jigen-san, and then my parents and Kuon-sensei. It didn’t spread out strangely, though.

Then, it won’t be good if I were to send him home straight after this, right? Fortunately, I have an excuse to restrain him some more time.

“Ah, there are Cheria fruits that Alica-san gave as souvenirs, would you like to try it? Also, she’s in the middle of preparing us some tea right now.”

“Ooh, can I?”

“Sure. They also look so fresh.”

Just in time, we noticed that Alica-san was pushing a cart on our way, and perhaps due to this timing, Jigen-san’s originally wrinkled face got more wrinkles as he laughed.

Well, then he drank the tea once. Since it seemed like he would still return even if I restrained him after handing over the documents, perhaps he had other business to attend. When I thought of it while gazing at Jigen-san, he squinted and showed a complacent smile. Uhm, did he find out about my speculation?

“I didn’t write it in the letter, but I have a small thought and immediately visited you to ask about it.”

“A thought, is it?”

“It’s about the person who raised Seiren-sama.”

Bu-, I was about to sprout my tea but I managed to hold it back, that’s great. After that, I properly drank the tea.

But still, about the orphanage director, huh. I wonder what kind of thought he has in regard to the person that he only knows about how he has the same name, same face, and same voice as Touya-san.

“It’s about that gentleman, I am thinking on how he might be a person of this world by any chance.”

“Eh?”

For me to not dropping my cup down, I’m really great. After returning it to its plate, I stared at Jigen-san who was sitting right in front of me once again.

I mean, the orphanage director is a person of this world?

I wonder why that kind of thought arised again?

“For him to accidentally find a baby and then gave the baby the same name that she was given in this world just based on the embroidery on the baby’s clothes. And that person also has the same name, same face, and same voice as a certain someone from this world. If they had some kind of connections for some reasion, it won’t be weird, right?”

“...”

Now that you mention it.

Well, that’s also weird for coincidences to accumulate like that. No, it’s not like I can stay calm at a time like this, right? Perhaps I’m also trying to run away from the reality.

“Well, since I went to the other world, it won’t be strange if there was someone else who had also come there, though.”

“Yes, that kind of thing. Because there is no single proof of it, please consider it as a senile’s delusion.”

No, with that kind of a gaze, don’t say that it’s just your delusion, Jigen-san. Certainly, there’s no proof at all.

However, if the orphanage director was actually a person of this world, then... The reason why he had carefully raised me, could it be.

“Aah. Also, there’s something I’d like to ask from Seiren-sama.”

“Eh, ah, yes. W-what is it?”

Oops.

Since the topic was abruptly changed, the process of switching my thoughts didn’t go smoothly for a moment. Or rather, will it really swing completely from the earlier talk?

“Do you still have your clothes at the time when you first returned here?”

“I, I still have it. Even if there might be no more chance for me to wear it, it’s still an important thing to me, so...”

“Oh, then that’s great. What I want to ask of you is... would you mind lending me that clothes?”

“Eh? Aah, well, I don’t mind at all but, why?”

My uniform and my shoes are stored in a deep and secret space of my drawer. They are the few things that I brought over from the other world, after all.

For wanting to borrow it, I wonder what will Jigen-san do?

“There are cases in which we can pick up things from the residual debris of magic that were left at the clothes of the person who was summoned over. There might be something we could pick up about the person who brought up Seiren-sama, so I was thinking that I should try examining it.”

“...Ah, you’re looking for an evidence.”

I see.

Although there is no magician in the other world, we are using science in exchange to that in order to find any evidence related to a crime. It can be picked up from the fabric of the worn clothes or any sticking residue, and many other things.

In this world, there are cases where the magic’s residue was left on the clothes or something like that. Because Jigen-san is a professional magician, he might be able to find something out from it.

I was a victim that was tossed to the other world and my gender changed as a result of my getting swept away. When you think about it, the one that would know most of the circumstances should be my belongings, huh.

“The closest one that could serve a purpose in this case should be my ring, but would that be fine?”

“But it’s Seiren-sama’s important amulet. If the need arises, then I will personally come to examine it.”

“...Thank you for being so considerate. I understand, then I will be taking out the clothes.”

“Ah, Seiren-sama.”

“It’s okay, I will be taking it out myself.”

No, certainly, I'd be slightly worried if he asked to borrow my baby ring. Still, thank you very much.

I declined Minoa-san's offer, went inside the bedroom to take out my uniform from its hiding place inside the drawer and took out the box in which I stored my shoes. After that, I thought for a while before pulling out my amulet pouch from the shelf.

If he's looking for the magical residue hanging around me, then it is very probable that he would find it at my ring which I carried for quite a long time. I have never washed it, too.

"Here you go. There's the shoes that I used to wear in this box."

I put my uniform and the shoes I brought to the table... ah, since there are shoes, I brought it over and put it beside the sofa where Jigen-san was sitting. After that, I placed my amulet pouch on top of them.

"Also, please use this as well. I only wore those clothes for 3 years, but this was made at when I was around 10 years old, if I'm not wrong... That's why, I've been carrying it around for 8 years."

The thing that knows more about me compared to my uniform should be the amulet pouch that was made to carry around my baby ring.

Before I made this, I used the one that was made by the orphanage's staff out of their good will. When I thought that I wanted to make it by myself for some reason or another and consulted the orphanage director about it, he gave me a cloth and a sewing set. Until it was completed, I pierced my fingers many times over.

"Ooh, I'm much obliged. I appreciate it and I will make sure to make use of it."

Jigen-san lifted up the box and the uniform with both of his hands and raised them in front of his face as if he was very thankful of those items. No, if these things turn out to be useful, then I'd be very happy about it.

"I also don't mind even if you have to mince it up, okay?"

"No, no, I won't go that far. It might become loose and got some lints, but that's about it."

"Haha, if it's only like that, then I don't mind at all."

"Once again, thank you very much."

“Thank you for your cooperation. I will do my best for the sake of Seiren-sama and the Shiiya family.”

Jigen-san nodded deeply and his eyes contained an absurd degree of seriousness that I have never seen before.

For Jigen-san to come here and say those things, in other words... it is indeed a serious matter, right?

While Taiga-san is investigating what happened in the Shikino family in the past, Jigen-san is investigating their connection to my kidnapping.

No doubt that it will turn into a very serious matter if there is indeed a connection.

Chapter 49: Deciphering the Documents in A Group

Then, the next morning.

“Morning, Saryuu. Despite the fact that we have returned home, it seems that you’re still as energetic.”

“Ah, Ane-sama, good morning. Yes, I’m full of spirit.”

“Yup, yup, being full of spirit is a good thing. Anyway, it’s about time-“

“Yes. Well then, I’ll excuse myself, see you later!”

“Yep, later-“

It’s been a while since I last welcomed the morning in the mansion, and after wiping my face, I began the day normally as I gave my greeting to Saryuu who was in the middle of his morning training just below my window. I changed my clothes and got ready for breakfast, everything proceeded as usual.

And, after I returned back to my room, I tried opening the document I received from Jigen-san last night. Inside the envelope was some papers around 10 pages, and they were all written carefully with a handwriting that’s relatively easy to read. Kaya-san, I’m sorry but I think you can learn from Jigen-san in this matter.

Anyway, since it’s Minoa-san’s holiday today, I asked Alica-san and Oriza-san to help me while I read the documents. If they find out my secret, we’ll think about it when the time comes, then.

“Uhm...”

“Oh my-“

“Oh dear...”

The first paper seemed to be an outline of the thing, and I reflexively groaned when I was reading that first paper. Oriza-san shrugged her shoulders while Alica-san put her hands on her cheeks and sighed.

What was written in it was firstly, about the time when I came to be missing. Both my parents and my wetnurse took their eyes off me, and in such a short time, I disappeared from this mansion. Approximately at the same timing, the magician that was working for us at that time also disappeared, but they were found immediately with a bloodstained figure. Well, I have heard about it more

or less from my father.

“That magician was good at defense magic and at detecting others’ presences, he was also in the middle of studying transference... Transference?”

Even magicians have subjects they’re good at, huh. Well, I guess it’s natural. Or rather, I understand about defense magic and detecting presences, but I wonder what is transference? Could it be about going to the other world, or that kind of a thing?

When I thought about it, Oriza-san—member number one—told me about that as she has just gone back from studying at Jigen-san’s place.

“Uhm, it’s like this. For example, to instantly bring the pillow that’s on the bed to be here, that’s the kind of magic it is.”

“Ah-. What, there is such a magic?”

“Yes-. It’s just that the thing has to have a weight that’s around the person who’s using the magic at the maximum, or else, it won’t move. It’s a main problem when we are carrying the luggage to the wagon-. That’s why, there are only few people studying it-.”

“Well, if the job of handling the wagon disappears, then it’d be a great trouble for the shops selling the wagons and for the farms.”

“That makes sense.”

Member number 2 who’s also studying at Jigen-san—Alica-san, she’s quite so-so in terms of reading books, but she’s not good at putting it into practice. Member number 3 who’s currently taking a holiday today—Minoa-san, is unexpectedly quick at understanding things. Aah, so this is what people say that each people has their own forte and weakness.

I thought that instant teleportation like that would be very convenient, but the people using it could move things at around 10 kilometers at most, huh. In addition, it would snatch away the job of the wagon. Whoa, the effect is quite big.

Come to think of it, I have never thought of the length and weight unit in this world. It’s easier to understand a distance by saying how long it’d take with a horse, and because we don’t have any weighing machine, we don’t really use the weight unit. Yosh, let’s try asking about it later.

“Speaking of which, Jigen-san and Kuon-sensei uses delivery snakes to send

some letters when they are busy, but why don't they use transference magic for that?"

"It seems that the magic's performance is quite bad-. Besides, if it collides with a magician's barrier midway, it seems that the thing will just disappear. After all, defense magic is such a magic."

"...That is, well, they'd rather use the snakes who can carry the letter while avoiding the barrier, huh... are they avoiding it?"

"Defense magic is fundamentally a barrier raised by a magician next to it. As long as we confirm things with the magician before we move past by, then everything will be fine, so Jigen-sensei has ever told me."

I see, so it's not like we can go past by them just like that. Letters, huh... If only it can be transmitted through the wire just like a facsimile, then everything will be fine, but that doesn't seem to be possible. It will be a big job just to pull the line from now on. Also, the mail delivery stores' jobs will be gone.

So, with convenient things, there is the risk of various people's jobs to disappear.

While I was being impressed with such weird thing, I continued to read. Jigen-san, during the time when we were absent, apparently he re-examined the whole mansion's premise, more or less. I wonder if he scanned the place with his magic, it must be quite tiring.

Anyway, it seemed that there appeared some kind of a magical remnants that weren't discovered when he examined it before. I see, Jigen-san, he had examined this mansion before.

That seems to be the case. Since he just arrived right after I disappeared, the first thing he did was to do a premises search. ...For some reason, I didn't feel like the way I put it in words was wrong.

"We could understand what kind of magic was used if we were to examine the magical remnants, right?"

"It seems so. I'm still ignorant in that matter, but-, if it's Jigen-sensei, it seems like he'd be able to understand what type of magic it is by taking a glance on it-."

Oooh, as expected of Jigen-san. However, the fact that the magical remnants

couldn't be discovered unless that Jigen-san searched around the premises for at least twice, were they so skillfully hidden?

And, the magical remnants are... Let me see, a piece of something, huh. This word, just how do you read it?

"...Uhm. Oriza-san, how do you read this?"

"Yes, ye-s? Uhm, it's [substance fotation]."

Substance fotation.

It seems like something remarkable is coming out, oy.

"Uhm, to sum it up, it's a magic to make a makeshift replica, or rather, disposable tools. Long time ago, it seemed that it was used in a crime-, and because there was a past king who died because of it, it's prohibited nowadays-."

I see. In other words, it can be used to make weapons at any time and anywhere, huh. There should be other uses of that magic with the exception of making weapons, right? In addition.

"Even if it's prohibited, the users can still use it, huh..."

"That seems to be the case, but from what Jigen-sensei has told me, its efficiency seems to be bad-. Besides, if it's found out that you used it, you'll be immediately charged with a capital punishment-."

"Ah-."

Immediately charged with a capital crime, that's so strict. Well, I can understand it since it was used to assassinate the king. By the bad efficiency, could it have something to do with someone's magical power?

Hm-, but I now know that magic is prohibited, and if that's the case...

"But isn't it something similar to transference? One is about making things, while the other one's bringing things over."

"That seems to be the case. Eh, if that so, then why is transference not prohibited?"

"I have said it earlier, but with how the item disappears once it collided with a magic barrier, then it's already one reason-."

When I voiced my honest question, Alica-san slightly tilted her head. This kind of thing is Oriza-san's field of expertise. Still, it seems like she has studied well.

“And then, its efficiency is still better than substance formation, though the difficulty level seems to be as high-. Jigen-sensei has also told me that we had to design the specification such as from-where-or-where and what kind of thing should be brought here, or else it won’t be good-.”

“Rather than the high difficulty level, it’s more troublesome instead.”

“Its difficulty is high-. If you make even the slightest mistake, for example, it seems like the pen tip could snap into the palm of your hand.”

“Whoa, that hurts, that’d hurt, a lot.”

Then, rather than troublesome, it’s more like the difficulty level is high. Even if you can use it, don’t use it, then.

Still, Oriza-san, she knows a lot-.

She has heard a lot from Jigen-san, but... how did she manage to hear those things?

As I thought so, I turned my gaze towards Alica-san and, ah, for some reason, she smiled yet at the same time, it looked like she didn’t smile. Her veins subtly stood out.

“Oriza. Could it be... did you try to learn transference magic in order to make your work easier?”

“Umph!”

Alica-san’s pointed out, and it was easy to tell that Oriza-san was the one to raise her voice in her surprise. Oh well, carrying the luggage is tiring, so it’s not like I can’t understand her feelings.

“As a conclusion, it doesn’t seem that it can ease your job, so you should just stop.”

“I agree-. Boo-hoo-hoo, it doesn’t go so smoothly, right?”

I didn’t feel any urge to get angry at Oriza-san who was easy to understand. After all, isn’t it obvious that it’s better for everyone if their jobs can be easier? I could hear Alica-san’s whispering, “Oh, well,” as if she had just realized it.

Now then.

It’s not like we only have to examine things as our sole mission right now.

Starting from this month, our schedule would be full with dance practice.

The reason was simple, it’s because I had to perform a dance. About one month

later, we'll be holding a party at our mansion. I was informed of it during this morning's meal.

"Party, is it...?"

"Umu, It's a debut party for our daughter who has just returned home safely."

"That is right. It also has an implication of spreading the news about how our family's daughter finally returned home to everyone, and that we are looking forward to be introduced to a good husband-to-be."

Ah-, I quickly understood as my parents explained those things to me. Nah, so far, the only marriage partner candidate that I have is Taiga-san. However, there are other feudal lords here and there, and since it's Shiiya family's daughter, there seems to be a lot of people aiming to be my partner in the political marriage of convenience. There also seems to be people of the royalty.

Well, certainly it's not a bad thing to meet with the other people. I can increase my acquaintances, for the sake of Saryuu who's going to succeed this house in the distant future, too.

And, after talking about that matter, Tou-san stared at me fixedly, and then said.

"We also have no choice but to send a written invitation even to the Shikino, and I dare say that Touya-dono might come as well. I earnestly warn you to be careful."

"Y-yes."

Earnestly, so my father emphasised, as his expression seemed to be full of pressure.

Could it be that you are planning to settle everything there, Tou-san? Well, he was formerly his rival in love, so he should have some kind of fighting spirit.

Nah, hey me, it's a matter concerning you, you have to get yourself together. If something were to happen, I will be the one most concerned about it.

Next to my father, the woman whose heart was competed for was smiling. I wonder if it's true that I resemble my mother a lot?

"Ah, that's right, Seiren."

"Yes?"

"Won't you write another letter from you to Taiga-dono? Telling him to attend

the party without fail?”

Eh, a letter from me? Nah well, he seems to be relatively dependable and I also want to hear more about the Shikino family, so if it's just sending out a letter, then it'd be fine, but...

But, Taiga-san's easy to understand—he seems to like me, so I wonder if it'd be fine. To send that kind of letter...

“If I were to do that kind of a suggestive action, I wonder if he'd get to think that way? I feel somewhat guilty.”

“It's all right. If Nii-sama's like that, I'm worried that he will miss getting a wife.”

Oi, Saryuu who has been listening to everything nonchallantly next to me. That kind of a thing, if it were a woman saying that, then she'd be getting married late, right? In addition, he's talking like that about his own biological older brother, what a severe thing to say.

“...Well, I will try, though.”

It's the truth that he seems to be reliable, but anyway, let's write a letter. If something were to happen, please help me, though.

Chapter 50: Immediately, The Letter's Condition

Only 3 days have passed ever since I sent out a letter to Taiga-san, but a reply letter arrived.

When I came down for breakfast, Yuzuruha-san was dealing with someone as he opened the entrance door. And, he turned over as he noticed my presence with an expression that told me that I was just right in time.

“Good morning, Seiren-sama. There is an express letter sent to you.”

“Good morning. So early in the morning?”

“It was designed to arrive as quickly as possible. This is it, here you go.”

“T-thank you very much. ...Taiga-san, huh. That was so quick.”

I noticed the sender from the written letters. Which means Taiga-san wrote a reply as soon as he received my letter and immediately sent it, huh? That's really as soon as possible.

“Yuzuruha-san. Could you please wrap something up for the mailman? It's been hard for him, having to deliver the letter at such an hour, right?”

“Hmm, that is right. Then, let's wrap some confectioneries up and hand it over to him.”

When I asked, Yuzuruha-san quickly arranged for it. Really, thanks for your hard work.

Since it's a world that has no motorcycles just like the other world, it seemed to be unreasonably hard on him. No matter how many kinds of carriages exist, their speed couldn't compare to motorcycles and they also shake often.

...Because the road's stone paving at most, one would also jolt whenever the motorcycle shakes, right? The tire is made of rubber too, so I wonder if it's still good?

Setting aside that kind of thoughts, let's focus on the letter from Taiga-san first.

“I have planned on attending the party from the very beginning, but since it has come to this, then that's all the more reason I must absolutely come.”

“Oh my, oh my. Taiga-sama seems to take a great liking to Seiren-sama, doesn't he?”

“That’s right, that’s right-. Don’t you think that it’s pretty much settled, Seiren-sama?”

I can even feel his determination from his writing, and Alica-san and Oriza-san even poked fun of me so openly. I’m really sorry for making him use his determination for something like this.

However, with the exception of the Shiiya family, Taiga-san is the only person I can depend on like this. For some reason or another, I don’t have that much chance to meet with other people, too.

I’m sorry, and thank you, so I bowed my head towards the writing paper.

Anyway, what was written inside Taiga-san’s letter wasn’t only his answer towards my invitation. The one that he investigated from his own house was about the magician that went missing from the Shikino house approximately at the same time as my abduction.

“Regarding the magician Doumu, his whereabouts is completely unclear. His teacher has already passed away, and since he was an orphan in the first place, he had no blood relative, so the letter said.”

“He is completely suspicious, right-.”

“Right.”

If one were to try to say it, then the word that’s suitable to call him was an assassin or a lost messenger, or something like that.

...Then, was I meant to be killed? Whoa, I’d hate that.

Thinking that I was so grateful for being raised by the orphanage director, I continued to read ahead.

“Let see, his magic of expertise is flame magic and... Transfiguration?”

“It’s quite self-explanatory, it’s a magic to alter the form of things.”

Here we have the well-informed one, Alica-san’s turn. Or, how should I put it, with the exception of the magic related to the transference, Oriza-san doesn’t seem to have a good memory. She seemed to have fun, though.

“If it’s a simple form, then it can be applied on several things at the same time, but as the complexity increases, the number of the things that can be handled at once also decreases, so it’s not very popular.”

“Eh-.”

Though it's not popular, there are still people who can use it. Well, it doesn't seem to be very suitable for mass-producing things. Well, there's no choice but to laboriously do it by hands, and it's the most troublesome, right? But it's such a world.

...Altering the shape of things, huh.

"Altering the shape, could it also be applied on for example, animals?"

"I don't know-."

"I have never heard of such thing before. Why don't we try and ask Kuon-sensei?"

"That's right. There's a lesson at noon, so shall we ask her?"

In response to the question that I asked, Oriza-san shook her head immediately. Alica-san also tilted her head, so at the very least, it doesn't seem like to have any major utilization.

"Transfiguration magic, to the animals, is it?"

At afternoon lesson time. When we threw the question that appeared this morning to Kuon-sensei, she pondered while furrowing her brows. Ah, this is an unprecedented thing.

"I've never heard of it, too. It's not something that my grandfather has ever dealt with, or more precisely, there is an unwritten rule that states how the transfiguration magic shouldn't be applied on living things."

"Ah-. Which means, it's something that one has never thought on, right?"

"That seems to be the case. Perhaps, something happened long, long time ago that it turned into a taboo, I think."

Hmm, for some reason, it felt quite foggy.

I can somehow understand how that rule came to exist a long time ago. I don't know the origin of it, but perhaps something happened a long, long time ago, right?

However, if there existed someone who smashed down that rule right now, then...

"...Speaking of transfiguration, Seiren-sama."

Kuon-sensei, who seemed to cease her pondering, called me without any

change in her unabashed tone of voice. She then presented an envelope with a slightly dull color. Today seems to be a day full of letters.

“It’s the result from examining your clothing. My father entrusted it to me.”
“T-thank you.”

Clothing. Which means, the clothes and shoes that I wore in the other world, and also the amulet pouch.

The result, whether there was any magic residue left over there. If one were to call it with the other world’s term, then this should be something akin to the result of a forensic’s work?

“Let me see.....”

At the paper I took out from the envelope, I saw a sentence written there, and for an instant, I shivered.

The magic performed on Seiren-sama is presumed to be a developed form of the transfiguration magic.

“...Whoa.”

“...It seems to hit a bull’s eye.”

The ones who could understand the meaning of it were only me and Kuon-sensei who peered in.

The taboo to perform transfiguration magic on animals, or even more, to humans.

Despite how advanced it might be, to perform a sex change-!
Stop bullshitting me, damn it-, thanks to this, I wasn’t accustomed to wearing female underwear at this age, or to be in poor physical health once each month, there were lots of troublesome things! At best, I can get used to something after around 3 or 4 times!

“Seiren-sama, did you receive the transfiguration magic?”

“.....Ah, yeah.”

Alica-san timidly talked to me who was greatly perplexed and was screaming internally in my mind. Aah well, it was something which was written on the paper that was laid out bare on top of the table, after all.

A developed form of the transfiguration magic. How would that affect me who

has received such a magic?

“Come to think of it, Seiren-sama, when you took a bath for the first time here, you said that you have never seen your own breasts before, but...”
“.....Yes.”

Oriza-san was having cold sweats. Aah, now that you mention it, I said such things at that time, huh?

Oh well, I was a man just before that, so of course I have never seen my female self's breasts.

.....Yosh.

“Kuon-sensei. Minoa-san is having a magic lesson with Jigen-san today, right?”

“Yes. They should be reading a textbook around this time.”

“Is that so? Then, it'd be better to talk to all 3 people at the same time, right?”

If that fact was exposed, then we'll think about it when the time comes. That was what I thought.

Being inflicted by the transfiguration magic, what happened to me? There's no other choice left for me now, but to explain about it honestly.

“Are you sure about it?”

“I think it'd be better to talk about it earlier. That way, everyone will be able to understand the situation.”

Kuon-sensei was greatly surprised, but I wonder what kind of face I'm making right now? In my own terms, ah-, I feel refreshed after settling my resolution. If everything was revealed, then I'd feel helped even more. If I were to be abandoned by Taiga-san and avoided by Saryuu, then that's something inevitable.

“I'll explain about the reason behind me addressing myself as [Ore], and about everything else.”

Chapter 51: At Last, Truth Explanation

After going to Jigen-san's house with everyone else, I talked about the truth to all 3 maids there, including Minoa-san.

About where I was and what I was doing after disappearing from the mansion up until the time when I returned home.

"...So, well, that's how things were. Sorry for hiding it until this time."

It took me a while to settle on my resolution, but the time it took to confess everything only lasted for a moment.

Well, it's because I only said that I was raised as a man in the other world, though. After that, well, I felt refreshed for some reason. With this, I have nothing else to hide... so I thought.

Now then, as for the response from the maids that heard this story.

"..."

Minoa-san was speechless. If we wait for a bit longer, would she have any sort of reaction?

"Seiren-sama was... a man..."

Alica-san was staring at me with a serious face. Well, even when I was a man, I had feminine features on my face, though.

"Eh-. But Seiren-sama is adorable-."

"Oriza-san, perhaps that's not what you should be concerned about."

Oriza-san unexpectedly didn't change at all. Or rather, I felt honestly saved from that kind of reaction. To be frank, even from before, I've also felt like... No, it's not like I'm saying that I'm cute myself, okay?!

Minoa-san who had been speechless for a while, blinked her eyes several times before turning to face me.

"What did the Master and Madame think of it?"

"Tou-san and Kaa-san? Hmm-..."

Being asked that, I tried to recall my parents' reactions.Huh?

“For some reason, they didn’t seem to have any special reaction. I was already a woman when my mother hugged me.”

That was the result of me trying to recall that moment. Whoa, for some reason, I’m having a facial spasm.

When I first met my mother and embraced tightly by her, I noticed that there was something caught between us, and I was like, “Eh-?”

So, when my mother asked, I only nodded, and when I was told by my father that they had something to tell me, the two of them seemed like they didn’t care about it at all.

The two of them didn’t see the male version of myself in the end, so they seemed to be like, “Oh, well,” yup.

“Then, may I do that as well?”

“Do what?”

“Do the same reaction as the Master and Madame.”

Minoa-san who heard my answer seemed to conclude things like that. In other words, for the time being, let’s not think about it.

Well, that seems to be the best. Even when you try to think about it hardly, it’s not like the past can change. Or rather, in my case, I was originally born as a female and then got kidnapped as a man, and returned to be a female again when I returned here, it was quite a bothersome circumstances.

“Aah, yeah. I’d be helped if you could just act normally without worrying about it... Or would that be impossible?”

“Or rather-. Seiren-sama, with the exception of your masculine way of speech, there doesn’t seem to be any problem-?”

“That’s right. Certainly, I feel like you’re relatively acting like a woman.”

“As far as we are concerned, we think that you’re really like a woman from the Shiiya family.”

Those words were said by the usual Oriza-san, Alica-san whose expression seemed like she agreed on something, and Minoa-san who seemed to have stopped thinking about it. Was I being praised or something?

No, that is irrelevant to whether I’m a man or a woman, I think that the problem perhaps lies in how I was able to grow up.

Speaking of my being able to grow up, I’m sure that it’s thanks to the orphanage

director.

Oh well, it seems that everyone has understood it, so let's try to discuss something with them for a bit.

"So, well. I haven't talked about it with Saryuu and Taiga-san, but do you think it'd be better for me to tell them?"

"Shouldn't it be better for you not to tell them?"

"That's right. Even if you told them, it doesn't seem to hold any kind of significance-... Saryuu-sama seemed like he'd be staying in bed for a long time, though."

"If you'd get married to Taiga-sama in the future, then at that time, you should do as you like, so I think, Seiren-sama."

Alica-san immediately replied. Just as Oriza-san said, if Saryuu were to know that I was originally a man, then it seemed like he'd have nightmares in his sleep."

Then, Minoa-san. The talk about my marriage immediately came forward. No, I also want to think about it for a bit longer, though.

"...Somehow, it doesn't feel like it can be settled, huh?"

"Is that so? I haven't seen Taiga-sama's state of affairs in actuality, but from what I can conclude from the letter that I saw this morning, Taiga-sama seemed to like Seiren-sama very much."

The one who answered first was Alica-san who hasn't seen Taiga-san in actuality. If the person who hasn't seen the reality directly like her could say something like that, then I wonder what about the other two who've already witnessed it in person?

"...The basket, it'd be bad if it hit him, right? ...I wonder if it'd be better to put it in inside the room quickly?"

"No, no, there's no use putting it in the room-. In the first place, we're talking about Taiga-san, so there should be no problem even if there's a maid that could land a direct hit with the basket at him, right? Hahaha, isn't it pretty much settled?"

Y-o-u g-u-y-s-. No, I won't voice it out, though.
Or rather, it seems terrifying enough that things might seriously end up like

that.

“...Kuon-sensei. Is it fine for me to be troubled with it?”

“I don’t mind, but the problem won’t be settled with just that, right?”

Yes, thank you for delivering the final blow. Certainly, that won’t solve anything, though.

“Well, such is that thing.”

Well, this is Jigen-san’s house. Because we were intruding on the classroom in which Minoa-san studied magic, obviously Jigen-san was also in here. So, the person himself cut into the conversation during the silence that came in after us women have finished making a racket.

“Now then, now then, the question is who made Seiren-sama turn into a male? The magician that could kidnap her and toss her into a different world, and then performing a magic that could alter her body, to put that into consideration, well, normally there is no such capable magician.”

“Normally, then is this case different?”

Alica-san asked that question in her curiosity. Well, that appears to be the case. With that kind of speaking manner, then it shouldn’t be something that we can think of normally.

“From my assessment, there are delicate variation to how one constructs their spells. To put it simply, it seems that Seiren-sama was thrown into a different world and had her body altered due to the spells performed by different magicians.”

Wow. I see, so Jigen-san has finished examining the magic remnants left on me. And the result that he deduced from it was this, huh?

Or more precisely, even when there are different magicians as suspects, there would be only two at the most, right?

“...That, such a possibility exists, huh?”

“Yes. The one who altered Seiren-sama’s body was most likely to be Doumu from the Shikino house. Perhaps after being thrown into a different world, he passed away there.”

As I thought-.

According to Taiga-san's letter, Doumu-san seems to be a magician whose expertise is the transfiguration magic.

Meanwhile, the magician who worked for the Shiiya household was studying transference magic.

Then, it's the most natural thing to think that each one of them performed different spells on me. What's more, the two of them either disappeared or passed away at around the same time, that's why.

But well, although it was really possible for the magician in the Shiiya mansion to do so, but Doumu-san was the magician from Shikino household and he met me right after I was born, or so they said.

If that's the case, then where or when did he perform his spell on me?

“Uhm. Jigen-san. Is it possible to perform a magic from a distance? To be more specific, it's about Doumu-san.”

“In case where the target of the spell is only an individual, the more distance it is performed, then the more uncertain the effect becomes. In other words, we can be the most certain when we perform a magic right in front of us.”

I guess so.

“In brief, that magician called Doumu, he had to come into the Shiiya mansion, right?”

“And he was found out by our house's magician, is that what happened?”

“And then, one thing happened after another, and they performed their own spells on Seiren-sama, was it such a thing?”

Minoa-san lightly asserted it, but I wonder if the people of our house didn't even notice such a thing? In other words, he was a trespasser, right? Then, did the situation develop in the same way as what Oriza-san and Alica-san said? Uhm that, then a protest to the Shikino house... Ah, it's impossible, huh? We hardly have any evidence here. In the first place, I wonder why he did such a thing?

“Uhm-. Can we send a protest to the Shikino family? That, or a prosecution to the royal palace?”

“Well, there is no decisive evidence yet, after all. In addition, by requesting a prosecution to the royal family, then it won't be settled as just a matter between the Shiiya family and the Shikino family.”

Jigen-san's words were deep and heavy. It seems that a quarrel among fellow feudal lord houses would be fairly difficult, and that's also why my father didn't seem to want to aggravate things.

"Yeah. That's why, we'd like to properly finish everything confidentially and amicably."

Kuon-sensei informed it. Then, it's concluded that the settlement would be akin to negating someone's crimes.

Otherwise, it might bring various troubles to me, my father, my mother, Saryuu, and even Taiga-san.

[For sharing this conversation with me means that you trust me even a little bit, right? I have to repay your trust, as a person who's going to succeed the Shikino family.]

Taiga-san who said that to me before, could it be that he was prepared for such a thing, and even knowing that, he still investigated things?

I'm sorry, if I don't say it many times over, I don't think that can be counted as my apology.

Chapter 52: Finally, The Debut

“Don’t be worried, Seiren-sama. Even if my ability is poor, you still have this old Kasai Jigen.”

The dignified voice resounded inside the small house.
The magician who told me that was looking fondly at me while nodding. Ah, I wonder why. Even though it’s just that, I feel relieved.

“When I first came here, I didn’t understand the whole background, but I knew the fact that Seiren-sama disappeared from within the mansion.”

That’s right, Jigen-sama was called to this house for the sake of looking for me and bringing me back. And then, he had been doing his best as this house’s exclusive magician.

“So, we concluded that this incident was caused by a trespasser from outside, and then I used defense magic to this whole mansion. Therefore, at the very least, we don’t have to be concerned anymore about any magic spell.”

The result of that time’s investigation seemed to be that.
By defense magic, is it something akin to a barrier that was also used at the villa? However, it was fine for us to be going out and in as usual. I wonder if it’d be okay when there were the needs of authentication like the case with the delivery snakes.

“What kind of technique did you use?”
“I can’t tell you the detailed information, but it’s a barrier that only let trivial magic spells to be performed within the mansion. There was an exception, and that was during the time when I performed a ceremony in order to call Seiren-sama back from a different world.”

I see. So, magic spells could only be performed in the exclusive or the private room inside the mansion?
However, I wonder if such a thing was often used?

“Speaking of which, is it quite rare to envelop the whole thing with a magic spell?”

“It takes a bit of time to prepare for the spells, and generally, the spells were only performed at the walls that surrounded the mansion. The two-layered barrier like the one applied in this mansion should be quite a rare thing even in the royal’s residences.”

“...I see.”

Didn’t Jigen-san just say something remarkable without any hesitation? It’s even quite rare to be applied in the residences of the royalty, in other words, it’s quite a strict barrier, right?

In the first place, it takes a bit of time, huh? If it really takes quite a bit of time, then it shouldn’t be that rare to see two-layered barriers like this, right?

Which means, the person who’s in front of me right now is not your ordinary magician. Although from the point of view of his granddaughter, Kuon-sensei, he might seem to be a doting grandpa.

And that magician who’s doting on his granddaughter was looking at me and gently smiled.

“During when Seiren-sama’s debut party will be held, such defense countermeasure will also be performed. However, no matter what kind of defensive countermeasure taken, there’d certainly be some holes. Therefore, please be careful.”

“...I see. Thank you very much.”

...Conversely speaking, it means that my parents stated that they wouldn’t be holding their daughter’s debut party if such a defense countermeasure wasn’t applied, huh? Especially, perhaps Tou-san. Nah, well, for some reason, that’s what I feel.

“Well, it seems that Taiga-sama will be in high spirits at that time, so perhaps we can also depend on him-“

“...To be honest, I feel like that’s the fastest defense countermeasure.”

“No comment~. However, there’s nothing better than us not having any screentime for such a thing.”

...No, really. In other words, there’s no other meaning that Minoa-san implied rather than good luck, Taiga-san.

Or rather, I wonder why Taiga-san’s name would appear there all of a sudden?

“That’s obvious, Taiga-sama even has sent a letter declaring his determination to try his best for Seiren-sama’s sake.”

“Kuon-sensei, please don’t make such a free translation like that...”

Around half month ever since that, there were a lot of preparations done. In the meantime, I had another Circulation and spent a whole day in bed, taking measurements in order to create a new dress, trying on the outfits several times while fixing trivial things, and somehow my footprint was also taken. Also, I diligently attended my dance practice.

Ah, I’ve grown used to it that I only had to stay in the bed for one whole day, so it’s pretty much becoming easier. What a relief.

I’ve also exchanged several letters occasionally with Taiga-san, or rather, the condition right now is roughly like a correspondence already. Taiga-san seems to be using a same day delivery service every time, and although it’s great to be able to read it faster, I feel sorry for the mailman. Therefore, I prepared some tea and chips for them. Thanks for your hard work.

“He said that he couldn’t get in touch with the servants who quit during that time. The only person he managed to find was gravely injured that he was confined to bed.”

“This has become increasingly suspicious, huh?”

I read the content of today’s letter and furrowed my brows together with Alica-san. Minoa-san had a fed up expression.

Taiga-san originally has often wandered around his territory, so apparently, it won’t be so suspicious of him for having to go here and there. Using that advantage, he has managed to investigate various things including the servants who quit during the time when Touya-san became the feudal lord. That means Genjiro has been flying around quite a lot, huh?

“Also... the outfit that I’d use to the party is now finished. I want to quickly show it to Seiren-sama...”

“As expected, he especially tailored a new clothing.”

“He is really serious, huh...”

“Minoa-san, Alica-san, can you please put the same level of seriousness towards thinking of the earlier topic instead?”

For some reason, each and every time this sort of topic enters, I come to my

wits' end at each time, too. About how it's been a while since he last danced, or that he'd try to arrange his hair. Nah, it's doesn't feel bad to be liked to this extent, though. How do I say it, I feel like being desperately appealed by a clumsy person.

...Somewhat, I feel like it won't be enough no matter how many times I apologize. The other party who's trying to appeal so desperately like that is Taiga-san who isn't aware of my own circumstances. About how I'm a male on the inside.

That's why, at the very least, I think that I'd like to wait for the current problem lying in front of our eyes to be settled precisely first before trying to shake him with that. I'd like it if things will go smoothly just like how it went with my parents and my maids, but there's no way it'd go as smoothly as that, huh.

Anyway, as the preparations were done in quite a hectic manner, finally the party day arrived in the twinkling of an eye. From around noon, I can see through the window that there are carriages arriving in front of the mansion. Ah, in order so I won't meet with the guests until my debut time, to put it roughly, I'm under a house arrest. Well, since it will be my first time going out in front of the guests and greet them, there are a lot of things I need to do. Specifically, afternoon bath. I need to wash my whole body, dry my hair, and wear new clothes—even my underwear. I'll get changed to the dress that was specifically made for this party just right before the party starts, so before that, I'm wearing a casual outfit and lightly eat my meal. Since I'll be pretty much busy to talk with the guests about many things, I don't have much leeway to enjoy the meal.

Anyway, when evening came, I changed into the dress. I've worn it several times during the fitting, but this is the first time I'll actually be wearing it.

“Hey, do they suit me? Like the dress and the make up?”

“Of course, Seiren-sama.”

“They suit you very much-.”

Minoa-san nodded in satisfaction and patted my shoulders. Oriza-san seemed to be enjoying the situation as usual.

It's a bright red long dress with many frills that barely didn't drag the hem off. There was a long ribbon around my waist that was tied in a bowknot at the back

side. There was a portion of the skirt that was longer, but it looked kind of cute. Well, this came from the person wearing it.

The neck portion was considerably open and decorated with mainly golden-colored accessories. Obviously, I also brought along my precious amulet. My hair which got considerably longer was curled around the nape, and it seemed to be covered by a black mesh. There were also plenty of flower decorations, and it felt a little bit ticklish.

And, well, just for today, my make-up was quite a lot. ...though I said that, it wasn't in any way gaudy. Or rather, it seems that it doesn't look gaudy because of the material issues. Only my lips are somewhat clear, though.

"And Seiren-samaa, what about the shoes?"

"Yup. This shoes, its material is quite soft, huh. It looks okay."

"I'm glad-. Ah, again, please don't fall over, okay?"

"I'll be careful."

I have become used to Oriza-san's comments with her smiling face such as what happened above. Or should I say that I was being taken care by this silly girl?

Regardless, for the dancing performance, I'm wearing a tall shoes with deep red color. However, I feel grateful because it's got quite a large ground surface. It's the type that has ribbon up to the ankle, so it's pretty comfortable. I can firmly fix my feet inside the shoes.

"An insole was created in order that the shoes would fit your sole of feet, so I think that it would hardly make your feet slip off. Even so, if you're still worried about it, you can call us servants any time."

"Yeah. But is it fine for me to excuse myself and escape while in the middle of talking with other people?"

"It's our job to take over that part, too."

I think Minoa-san who spoke out clearly like that was really cool. The servants and the employees have to be quite intelligent, or else they won't be able to do their work properly, huh?

"Seiren-sama, your escort has arrived."

"Yes, please come in."

"Excuse me. Seiren-sama, there is still time left, so let me guide you to the hall."

The one who'd be my escort was Yuzuruha-san who was wearing black outfit that's thinner than usual. He also wore a green scarf tie, and he looked cool. Well then, shall we go? When I stood up, Oriza-san smoothly approached me. Whoa, just now, I didn't even hear her footsteps.

"We will be mainly watching over the banquet hall and its circumference. There are also other servants being on alert outside the mansion, and actually, there are Alica who's mixed in with the other guests."

So that's why I hadn't seen her face!
Whoa, I now understand everything. And at the same time, I felt relieved. I see, at the very least, Alica-san will be near me, huh? Yosh.

"Thank you. ...For now, I'll try my best."

I lightly clenched my fist and followed behind Yuzuruha-san's back to exit the room.

My mother had been waiting in front of the door. My father was already inside and he seemed to be in the middle of talking with the guests. Being a feudal lord seems very tiring.

When Yuzuruha-san opened the door, a lot of gazes ran into our direction simultaneously.

The banquet hall looked completely different from when I saw it during the cleaning earlier. The chandelier was shining brightly, there were lots of buffet tables lined up with various light meals and drinks on them, and there were the servants who were wearing a slightly cooler outfit than usual as they walked around the area.

And then, well-obviously, there were lots of dressed up people. Everyone was brimming with the aura of rich people, and I seemed to lost my appeal. Just where on earth did these people come from?

Even so, I wonder why there were lots of middle-aged men coming to this place? The one who seemed to be the youngest among such guests was—no matter how you looked at it—the one who was wearing a light green outfit, Taiga-san. Is that it, did they come because they wanted to offer the position of their bride to me?

...I was greatly perplexed at my own thoughts. Hmm, I'd better stop now. Or how should I put it, I didn't manage to spot Alica-san. Did she manage to avoid

my line of sight that well? That seemed to be the case.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. This is my first time appearing in front of everyone like this. I’m the eldest daughter of the Shiiya family, Seiren.”

Anyhow, I didn’t want rumors about me reading the greeting scenario that was written in a piece of paper.

That’s why, I delivered my greeting in words that I could say on my own.

Tou-san and Kaa-san, and even Taiga-san were looking at me. Therefore, I should be fine.

“Please enjoy this banquet.”

When I held my skirt and slightly bowed, suddenly there were the sound of clapping hands resounding in the hall.

Chapter 53: The Difficult Debut

After that point, well, things turned to be quite difficult.

No, after all, the people attending this banquet today had indeed come to see me, right? Then, I had to greet them in turns.

It's good that the method of greeting by putting our glasses in a toast is the same as the other world's, but that's not the problem for now. Since my mother who entered together with me is now busy with greeting other people, and despite Yuzuruha-san is unexpectedly paying so much attention to me, in the end, I have to greet the people by myself.

Example number one. The uncle who's standing out as a plump and fat merchant. I wonder why this person is wearing so many rings at once? I wonder if it's because they can be converted into money whenever something happened? However, he seems to be a good person, uhm...

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Seiren-sama. I'm governing a territory that's located at a western side from here, my name is Kushima."

"Kushima-san, is it? Pleased to meet you."

"Yeah. The dress that Seiren-sama is wearing right now seems to be made using the silk from our territory, huh?"

"Ah, is that so? I'm sorry for my lack of knowledge. However, it feels comfortable to wear and I like it."

"Ooh, it seems to have won your favor already, Ojousama."

I see, the silk, huh? Since there was enough demand from good houses, it seemed to be quite profitable. Actually, this dress can be used to move smoothly without any disturbances. Its texture is also good.

Example number two, the uncle with his tough short hair. Uhm well, at a glance, I feel like he seems to be welcoming customers at the riverside fish market, or so I thought.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Seiren-sama. I'm Kadzuki who's working for the feudal lord at the east port city."

"Kadzuki-san, is it? Pleased to meet you. Since it's a port city, are the people

over there able to catch a lot of good fishes?”

“Yes, and we’re also making money of it even in this town. To be frank, I was formerly a fisherman.”

“Hee, I see. Since the fishes are delicious, then it’s reasonable.”

My hunch was right. No matter in which world it is, the feeling that fishermen gives off is quite the same.

But well, thank you for the delicious fishes. The territory of Shiiya isn’t close to the sea, so perhaps it’s thanks to Kadzuki-san and the people over there that we can eat sea fishes, huh?

Example number 3, a normal uncle. Yes, he seems to be wearing good outfits with his utmost effort, but he looks like a normal uncle.

I clapped my hands together as I thought that it was somehow easy to see through, and well, that seems to be quite reasonable.

“I’m Kariba, the head of a town who’s in the territory of the Shiiya family. I should have greeted Ojousama earlier, but...”

“Kariba-san, is it? No, it’s also my fault for having a lot of things to do. I had a lot of fun at the Spring Festival.”

“Ooh, then I’m glad. There were talks about how the delinquents acted violently at that time, so I was afraid that something might happen to Ojousama...”

“I went there with the servants, so everything was fine. Leaving that aside, please take care of the townspeople.”

“Such a considerate words... This Kariba will definitely do his best for the sake of the city, and I’ll be wagering my life for it.”

To put it simply, he is a town mayor.

Oh, thank you for your hard work. That was my bad for adding more pressure, really, it was my fault. It might be late to say it now, but sorry.

Oh well, there were more patterns like this afterward. Incidentally, there seemed to be bachelors all over the place, but the oldest one seemed to have exceeded 30 years in age, while the gap to the youngest one was quite wide, as the youngest one seemed to be around the age of 1X-ish, and he seemed even younger than Saryuu. What the hell is going on with this? So I thought, but in the meantime... according to Yuzuruha-san’s information, the men of the

marriageable age were mostly already married or were going to the army. I see.

Nevertheless, I feel tired.

As expected from my first meeting with them, although there was no one who said anything about being their son's bride, it was still somehow quite obvious, well. Or should I say that I can tell from their gazes?

Well, I admit that I'm not unaffected at all by those men in that kind of a way. After all, I was a man up until last spring. But well-, it's tough because I understand how they'd want to evaluate me.

If a conversation was prolonged to a certain extent, there would be some servants or maids who held a tray and approached me while asking, "Would you like some drinks?", so using that chance, I'd leave after saying, "Then, if you'd excuse me". Even so, their gazes were still running after me. Or rather, despite having lots of foods being lined up, I really don't have any time to eat them, huh? It's a right decision to have a light meal earlier.

Meanwhile, the guests whose first meeting with me were done somewhere else finally approached me.

"Seiren-sama."

"Aah, our turn finally comes. It's been quite difficult, isn't it, Seiren-sama?"

"Ah, Touya-san. And Taiga-san, too."

Ugh.

I'm glad that Taiga-san came, but the person next to him is Touya-san, after all. Nah, if I were to look at him without any prejudice, then I'd think that they were a wonderful pair of father and son.

Even when I look at him again, he really resembles the orphanage director. Though I don't understand what kind of face I'm making right now, for the time being, let's smile. He came here as one of the guests today, after all.

"Thank you for going through the trouble to come here today."

"No, no. If it's for Maya-dono's daughter's debut party, then there's no way that this Shikino Touya won't be rushing to come here."

"Well, well."

Since it's Kaa-san's daughter's debut party, huh?

I wonder if this person's still pretty much in love with my mother? And

somehow, I seem to take after my mother a lot.

This person, could he have something towards me who's my mother's daughter?

I sighed a little bit, and Taiga-san caught a glimpse of my sigh.

"Even so, Seiren-sama. You've worked hard today, but are you all right?"

"Eeh, well... this is my first time being in this place. In addition, since there are so many people coming here, I can't seem to remember them that well."

Since Taiga-san has been familiar with me more or less, it should be easy for him to understand that my face is having a cramp.

It's hard to match their faces with their names and remember them. Though it's not so bad when it comes to discerning which are servants and employees, which are fishermen, and which are town mayors. My first meeting with Taiga-san is impactful in a sense, and Touya-san has a familiar face, so there's no way I'd forget them.

So, when I began to feel slightly troubled, Taiga-san told me, "Everything's going to be all right."

Touya-san took two glasses from Kaya-san who passed by exactly at that time, and handed me one while saying, "Here you go." Taiga-san had already been holding a glass, so we made a toast as our glasses made a small sound. Because I've made sure that it contained only soft drink, it should be fine.

"Shiia family's butler should have known all people who've come here. Though it's natural as they all had to show their written invitations."

"Yuzuruha-san?"

"Yeah. That's why, it's better for you to ask him later on. Perhaps he also has portraits containing their data."

"Understood. Thank you very much."

I see, I'm saved, then. By portraits, which means their pictures, right? This world has no photos, so the portraits are the substitutes.

Once I was relieved, I drank up my drink in one gulp. The cider that contained Cheria fruits was very refreshing and delicious.

Suddenly, the music began to play.

As I looked towards the curtains in front of me, the red curtain was being pulled from both sides, and there was a stage over there. So, in no time, the orchestra

that was called here—or I wonder if it's alright for me to address them like that—anyway, those people began their musical performance.

The form of the musical instruments were fundamentally similar to those of the other world's, like how one instrument was similar to a violin with their cylindrical container, and the wind instrument was slightly undulated.

“Oh?”

Taiga-san who noticed the music playing just like me, smiled cheerfully while looking at me. Then, he brought his hand closer to his chest as if he was being all formal. Ah, this is...

“Seiren-sama, would you mind dancing with me?”

As I expected-. Well, this is my first time to be actually dancing, so it might as well be with the person I know. Taiga-san seemed to have practiced dancing just for this day, too. ...How amazing, trying to appeal via our correspondence.

“I'm not good at it, but if you're fine with me.”

“I will take the lead, so please be relieved.”

“...Then, sure. Please take care of me.”

That's why I obediently took his stretched hand. Ah-, I felt relieved. Because I met him in summer, I felt somehow that it was fine being with Taiga-san like this.

...Yup. I seemed to be pleased with Taiga-san. Though I'm not even so sure in what kind of meaning.

“Then, see you later, Father.”

“Yeah. Go on, Taiga.”

When Taiga-san lightly bowed his head, Touya-san bent his glass slightly while nodding.

Touya-san seemed to have a happy face, but in my eyes, he didn't seem to be smiling.

I wonder to what extent he saw me as [my mother's daughter]?

It's a bit scary.

“Are you all right, Seiren-sama?”

Suddenly, I couldn't see Touya-san's face anymore. Apparently, Taiga-san

seemed to have used his own body to hide Touya-san's face quite well. Really, I'm indebted quite a lot to this person.

"Aah-, well, somehow."

Since I felt relieved with just that, I nodded honestly. Then, Taiga-san nodded and whispered to me while we continued to dance.

"...My father seems to be thinking of Maya-dono even now. His relationship with my mother was merely for the sake of producing a successor for the Shikino family."

"I-is that so?"

Even so, I wonder how it will be? The feudal lord's family, I wonder if it's something like that?

...As I nodded, I noticed one thing. Why did he use a past tense for his last sentence?

"Uhm, about Taiga-san's mother..."

"Roughly around 5 years ago, due to her illness..."

Whoa, I heard something unexpected. I-in any case, let's continue to do my best in dancing, since it will be bad if I were to step on Taiga-san's feet, so I have to match his rhythm properly.

"...I'm sorry."

"No problem."

Though my voice as I said my apology was quite low, Taiga-san managed to hear it well.

I wonder why this person likes me. There should have been a better person for him.

After all, I was still a man until roughly 3 months ago, you know?

"By the way, Seiren-sama."

"Eh, ah, what is it?"

"You're quite skillful at dancing."

"T-thank you, very much."

No, well, there's no need to praise me that far. The fact that I'm quite poor at it was hidden because I could somehow match my rhythm with Taiga-san.

...I'm happy, though.

Chapter 54: The Tiring Debut

Perhaps since I had the courage to dance with Taiga-san at first, I tried dancing with some other people in the same way afterwards. I felt relieved because there were no one who reeked of alcohol. Nah, I didn't feel the same way when I was a man, but the breathes that reeked of alcohol was disgusting, right? Yup, the orphanage director was a reserved drinker, after all.

"Thank you very much."

"No, no. It's been an honor for me to be able to dance together with you."

Hahaha, so the former fisherman, Kadzuki-san, laughed. Though he was pretty lively, his dancing skill wasn't that poor, too.

A while after the dance ended, as expected, I felt tired. This time, it's my feet and my legs. Although the base of the heels was made wider, it was still quite tall. I felt that my lower leg was becoming stiff. As the music settled down, we had a little break time.

I came closer to the wall and rested there, but then a young lady who came from somewhere else approached me. She's wearing a dress with a slightly strong blue color, and I think that she's kind of cute. On top of the small plate she was holding, there was a canape.

"Seiren-sama, please have one."

"T-thanks... Hm-?"

I gladly accepted her offer... by the way, I just noticed one thing. Her voice from before, I seem to have known it so well.

I reflexively stared at the young lady's face to confirm it.

"Tehe."

".....?!"

No, well, I almost shouted. I hurriedly held my mouth, though.

The one who gave me a canape, when I took a closer look at her, it was Alica-san. Come to think of it, she was mixed with the other guests, right? Or rather, when she untied her hair which was usually being braided, her hair became this soft, huh?

“Whoa, so cute. I didn’t recognize you at first.”

“Thank you very much. I usually tie my hair in a braid during work, so it’s only during occasions like this.”

“That’s right.”

Work is work, but during the party, she acts as my guard, huh. I was also indebted to her during the spring festival, but this kind of thing seems nice. I understand that I was being too careless at that time. However, it’s because I didn’t have any feeling of being targetted.

...Which reminds me.

“Hey, hey. I haven’t seen Kuon-sensei and Jigen-san, what happened?”

“Kuon-sensei is mainly looking after the floor upstairs. Jigen-sensei has been inside the ritual room since this morning.”

“The ritual room?”

Is it that room where I first appeared in when I returned to this world? Well, then obviously I didn’t see him.

Its entrance was at the other side, and there were not many people passing by that room. Nah, there’s no need to approach that room, too. When I need to go to the toilet, I’d pass by the side of that room, but since the door’s closed, I can’t really get a glimpse on what’s inside.

“I wonder what he’s doing? The place being that place, perhaps he’s doing something with magic, though.”

“That seems to be the case.”

In this aspect, Alica-san doesn’t seem to have a different opinion. Well, a magician being inside a room which is used for performing magic spells, therefore there is only one conclusion we can draw.

Then, Alica-san stopped her gaze at me as if she remembered something.

“Aah. That’s right, there’s a message from Jigen-sensei.”

“Ah, yeah. What is it?”

I turned around at her after listening to her words which were strangely serious. Alica-san slowly dropped her voice and conveyed the message to me with a voice that seemed like she was chewing something.

“From now on, no matter what’s going to happen, the people of Kasai will protect Seiren-sama, so he said.”

Then, she seemed to be thinking for a short while before continuing her words.

“If something really happens, then please be very careful, so he added. Of course, we’ll also be careful.”

“...In other words, something might happen after this.”

“Yes, Jigen-sensei has predicted it like that.”

After being told about everything, I somehow managed to understand it. I see. The real issue at hand is not this party, but what’s going to happen after it, huh. It might be at the exact timing when the guests have gone home to a certain extent and when we were busy with tidying things up. In a sense, I’m the lure. Well, since our opponent has never showed their tail up until now, so it can’t be helped. With how things are right now, even Taiga-san wouldn’t be able to move any further, too.

“...I see.”

To tell you the truth, it’s scary. To begin with, things have become scary ever since Touya-san came to this house.

However, everyone’s here. Even Alica-san conveyed Jigen-san’s message like this to me.

If that’s the case, let’s do this! No, well, there were various things happening that I picked up my courage at strange things.

“Understood. I’ll do my best too, so if something happens, then I’ll be relying on you.”

“Yes.”

When I asked for another canape, Alica-san, with her fluffy hair, smiled.

“Well then, I think it’s about time to call it a night. Everyone, thank you very much for all the trouble you’ve gone through just to go here for the sake of our daughter, Seiren. Although she is still a young and inexperienced person, from now on, please treat her well.”

And then, with my father’s greeting, my debut party peacefully ended.

As expected from the guests that were invited to come to the feudal lord's mansion, there was no one who got drunk and behaved shamefully. Well, I saw a few people with their red faces getting dragged outside, though. Each time it happened, Minoa-san unexpectedly appeared and laughed a bit.

“Well then, please excuse myself. Seiren-ojousama.”

“Yes, thank you very much!”

So, since the town mayor's house was nearby, he waited for a bit before going home with a carriage.

The coachman seemed to be taking a rest in another room. I was wondering in which room he was resting, but since the coachman was a male, he should have rested in Yuzuruha-san's room, I guess.

Speaking of which, the former fisherman, Kadzuki-san has also quickly gone home. If he goes home at this time, he should be ready to land at his territory by tomorrow. Fishermen should have a lot of work to do from early in the morning, or rather, from the middle of the night. Uhm, please do your best.

Meanwhile, Kushima-san said that it'd be difficult for him to go home by this time, so he was staying over. Since he was with some of his attendants, he wasn't staying in our guestroom, but each of them was staying at the cottage that's located outside the mansion. Of course, the Shikino father and son, too. Thinking that I have to escort those people off, I'm currently at the entranceway. My father was also there, and in the first place, there was also the cheeky Oriza-san on standby next to me. Just now, when I glanced sideways at the flower bed, I caught a glimpse of Minoa-san.

“Taiga-san and the others are also staying, huh. Well, that's natural, as it's quite late now.”

“Yeah. As expected, since it's quite late already, I'm also hesitating to let Genjirou run at this hour.”

“That white horse has been serving Taiga-dono quite hard. You shouldn't bring more hardships to him.”

Taiga-san spoke while he was smiling. I see, so you came here by riding on Genjirou, huh? I can understand my father's comment too, but I guess it was so like Taiga-san, for him to be smiling in response to that.

“We’re supposed to be staying in a cottage that’s a bit distant. We also have other work to do.”

“Is that so? Even on such a day like this, you’re that busy, huh?”

“The work of a feudal lord is piling up, Touya-dono.”

“Mondo-dono should have an idea about it, right? Because he is also a feudal lord.”

Hahaha, so Touya-san laughed—and if you looked at him without even knowing anything, it looked like his laughter won’t stop at any time. His hand which he used to clap my shoulders was slightly sweaty, so please, wipe your sweat beforehand.

Or rather, by other work to do—it’s really an errand as a feudal lord, right?

“Well then, good night. Taiga-san, too, please sleep well so that you’d be able to finish the errand ahead of time.”

“I will be careful. Good night, Seiren-sama.”

“Touya-dono, Taiga-dono, please have a nice rest tonight.”

“We will. Well then, until later.”

Wait, by “until later”, he means...?

Touya-san’s gaze, thought it might be influenced with my awareness, it feels bad, somehow.

But well, Taiga-san is also there, so everything should be okay, right?

“Seiren-sama, thanks for your hard work-.”

“Thank you, Oriza-san. I haven’t done anything weird today, right?”

“Yup, there is none. You acted like a very adorable lady-.”

“Whoa-. T-thank you.”

“Oriza, please don’t take my line.”

“Err... Master, you haven’t told Seiren-sama yet about how cute she is, have you-?”

Hey, you. It’s bad for you to be saying such a thing when you’ve understood about how I am a man on the inside, really. But well, to be seen as a cute young lady, then that means I didn’t do anything shabby today, right? I approve it, then.

“Seiren, I will return first. You’re also tired, right? You’d better go to bed

earlier.”

“Yes, I understand. Good night, Tou-san.”

“Good night, Master-.”

“Yes, good night.”

My father cheerfully returned inside with his face turning red up to his ears. I wonder if it’s really that hard for a father to praise his daughter? I don’t understand it well because I have never had any experience of becoming a parent, whether it’s as a father or a mother.

“Yosh, shall we go back now?”

“Yes-. Once we return to your room, I’ll prepare a hot bath, so let’s wipe your body and take a rest-.”

After taking a deep breath, I went inside through the entranceway while talking with Oriza-san.

The door connecting the hall with the banquet room was left open, and I managed to catch a perfect sight of the servants who were busy tidying things in the party venue.

There were a lot of used glasses lined up on the wagon, and they made sound as the wagon was jolted.

Clink

Clink, clink, clink.

[Now, Seiren-sama. Please go on ahead.]

...

I have to go.

I don’t really understand, but I have to go.

Since someone is calling for me.

Ah, but wasn’t I supposed to return to my room and sleep?

However, I have to go.

“Seiren-sama?”

“...I have to go.”

Now, I wonder who’s calling me?

Ah but well, that kind of thing, it doesn't really matter.

Since I'm being called, I have to go.

But, still.

[If something really happens, then please be very careful, so he added.]

Yes. I have to go though, since someone's waiting for me.

...Help me.

Chapter 55: The Repulsive Midnight Truth

The place where I arrived at was a disconnected site located a bit further after going out from the mansion. The site didn't have a stone paving, and it was located inside of a dark and a quiet forest.

I arrived here because I was being called by someone. A certain landmark was glittering with a magical light.

"Welcome, Maya's daughter."

"...I-I've come."

My mother's daughter—there was only one person who would address me like that.

That person—Touya-san was spreading both of his hands so happily with the background of a small black carriage that was the source of the light.

I was being called by this person and arrived here in order so I could jump into this person's arms.

Why?

"Now, now. Let's hurry up, get dressed and go on a prenuptial trip together with me, dear little Miss."

Aah, so that's it.

I was supposed to belong to this person, that was why.

Then, I have to go.

No, that's wrong. Hey me, that's not how it's supposed to be.

Aaah, damn it, my head is so heavy. Someone should be coming over here, and yet.

...Who is it, again?

Uuum.

Now, the person that I want to rely on the most...

"Taiga...san."

"Did you call me, Seiren-sama?"

There was a reply as I called out a name. The familiar, yet the calm and quiet

voice managed to pull me back.

Wait, why am I here in front of Touya-san?! Or rather, uncle, why's your face so red and why are you panting?!

This feels bad, so I thought, as I raised my foot.

“...Nnn!!”

“Gwaaa?!”

I had a feeling like something soft and disgusting touched my toes, but I didn't notice it. No, well, even I could understand what a pain he must have felt, more or less. Though I didn't want to recall it.

Anyway, after stepping back further from Touya-san who was holding his groin in agony, I suddenly tripped over something and lost my balance. No matter how wide the heels' surface might be, it was still quite tall, after all.

“Seiren-sama!”

Taiga-san securely caught my falling body. Just like that, I slowly sat on the ground. Then, I realized that I was holding my breath. Aah, I don't want to breath so roughly like I'm panting.

Take a deep breath, take a deep breath.

“Wa-, haa...”

“Seiren-sama, are you all right?!”

“Ah-... yes. Thank you very much, Taiga-san.”

The feeling of having my back being supported was the same as that time when we rode on Genjirou together. For some reason, I felt relieved.

However... though I believed that somebody would surely come here, it was still scary, after all.

I mean, I wonder why did I even think of coming here in the first place? I can't understand it.

While thinking about it, Touya-san who was enduring the pain with his teary-eyes in front of me suddenly ranted.

“Are you fine with it, Taiga?! That girl was a man until this spring, you know? In addition, she was raised in an unknown, uncivilized world!!”

“...Just what kind of an idiotic thing are you talking about?”

Taiga-san answered like that as I felt like he was a bit flabbergasted. Uhm

well, if he was suddenly told of such a thing... Besides, to think that he'd abruptly say that. It wasn't a wise move.

However, it was nothing but the truth. I have to tell him that someday, so I vaguely think, since I have to properly explain it no matter what. If it's now, since Taiga-san is behind me, I can't see his face and it makes me feel at ease.

"Taiga-san. You might not believe it, but the thing that Touya-san said is the truth, so..."

"Seiren-sama?"

"It's the truth that I was raised as a man until this spring. Since my body was that of a man's before I returned to the Shiiya family."

"Seiren-sama, your way of speaking..."

So you were surprised with my way of speaking?! Well, the cat's out of the bag now.

"I'm sorry, Taiga-san. This is me, Shiiya Seiren. I was raised as a man in another world for 18 years. I had been hiding the truth all this time. I'm sorry."
..."

Taiga-san who thought that it was surely just a joke became silent as soon as he heard my words. I can't tell what kind of expression he's making and to be honest, I don't really want to see it, but I wonder if he loses his presence of mind?

Ah-, yup. Obviously this would shake him. What a shock.

...I see, if I consider this as a shock, then perhaps I thought of Taiga-san...
.....Well, not that it matters. I was already prepared for it.

"However."

However, there's one thing that I want to make clear.
Certainly, I was transported to a different world as a man and was raised there as a man, but...

"Why would Touya-san know about it?"

"Why, you ask?"

"Taiga-san now knows about it. But among us, the ones who know about it are my father, my mother, Saryuu, and Jigen-san who brought me back. In addition, Kuon-sensei and the maids who are accompanying me. There's no way you

could know about it.”

Oh-well-, I just threw everything out. If I were to trust Kuon-sensei’s words, then there’s supposed to be someone else coming here with the exception of Taiga-san. In any case, although people wouldn’t come to this place that often, this site is still within our territory. Rich people are something else.

“Well, it’s because I’m the mastermind who put the spells on Seiren-sama.”

“Shaaaaa!”

“Kuon-sensei!”

Look, here they come.

With a delivery snake riding on her shoulder, it was Kuon-sensei. She seemed to have not gone to the party at all from the beginning, so she was wearing her usual clothes, a thin one-piece with a cardigan on top of it. Which reminds me, did Alica-san say that she was checking things upstairs at that time?

Or rather, so Touya-san was the mastermind, huh? I wonder if it’s fine for you to do such a thing? Aren’t you a feudal lord?

“I asked Taiga-sama to come here first, and I’m glad that you’re all right.”

Kuon-sensei who was making her rude entrance with her arms crossed was unusually full of force. The snake on her shoulder spread its wings, perhaps it was trying to threaten with all of its might. I see, so you called for Taiga-san before, huh. Thank you.

While I was thinking about it, Kuon-sensei was already between us and Touya-san. I think that she was glaring at Touya-san. I understand that because that person seemed to be spooked for a moment. Obviously, I was talking about Touya-san.

“If you’re a man, then there will be no straight man coming after you. In other words, it’s an excellent insect repellent.”

“Haa?”

“W-what did you say?!”

Insect repellent.

In this case, it means that there’d be no man approaching me.

“...In other words, I was turned into a man in order to ward men off me?”

“To make a long story short, that seems to be the case. Ah, I’m taking your

testimony.”

In response to Kuon-sensei’s beckoning as she smiled cheerfully, Minoa-san’s figure could be seen from the opposite site of the carriage with a sullen face. Just right under her arms, there was a man who was curled up as he was covered in something similar to a carpet. Or rather, when I took a closer look, his hands and feet were tied with strings that seemed like a rolled up carpet.

“...Who is that?”

“My father’s close aide, Saiga.”

The one who answered my question was Taiga-san who supported me as usual. Nn-, for their names to be so alike, it felt bad somehow. Nah, it’s not something I should say out loud, though.

“Saiga! You, don’t tell me that you’ve confessed?!”

“I-I’m truly sorry...”

“Well, that’s exactly what happened, I have heard the whole story from Touya-sama’s close aide, Saiga-san. It’s natural for you to be bringing along your henchman to a place like this, after all.”

Kuon-sensei’s words were the same as always, but for some reason, it was honestly scary. I can’t really tell how or why, but it’s totally scary. Even though I can’t see anything other than her back, but it feels like I can hear the sound effects like, “Gogogogogo...” (**rumble rumble rumble**)

Or rather, Touya-san, by you mentioning [confessing] earlier, isn’t that the same thing as admitting that you did a bad thing? I wonder if this person is all right? Could it be that his mind freaked out because his objective was destroyed just right when it was about to be achieved?

“Aah, I haven’t done anything rude. I had only asked him to tell me the truth.”

“You shouldn’t have been able to use magic inside that mansion!”

“The one who can use Contact Magic is not just you, Touya-sama.”

I wonder if you’re even allowed to interrogate by using magic? No well, I wonder if there’s a magic spell that makes the target unable to lie? Anyway, I can understand it from the words, but it’s my first time hearing that vocabulary being mentioned.

“Contact Magic?”

“It’s as the name implies, it’s a magic that can be put into operation as long as you make a contact with the target. Normal magic can be performed even when you’re a bit distant, but you can’t perform it inside the Shiiya mansion.”

“Prepare the thing that’s already been applied with that magic beforehand, then make a contact with the target. Afterwards, you just have to put the trigger into operation, and that magic spell will show its effect. In this case, perhaps there’s something like a medicine being mixed into a drink, am I correct?”

Continuing Kuon-sensei, Minoa-san gave more explanation, perhaps it was something she learned from her magic lessons with Jigen-sensei. I think I should also study at least the knowledge of magic.

I mean, what I don’t understand is that—it seemed like it was triggered only after I heard the sound of glasses hitting one another.

Could it be that he performed the magic spell during that toast? Did he mix something into the glass that he toasted in front of me before I even noticed it?

“By no means have I ever expected that the head of the Shikino family could use magic, and there wasn’t even any limited information about it.”

“...Me, to. I have never known that my father could use magic.”

“Taiga-san also didn’t know?”

At the words I muttered, I heard him answering, “Yes,” from behind. What the heck?

If even his biological son didn’t know of it, that means that there was practically almost nobody knew about it. That’s why, Kuon-sensei said that she [heard about it] from someone like his close aide. And then, did he try to obtain me by using magic?

...Well, that’s it. In the first place, there’s a more pressing issue at hand.

“Uhm. Still, why would you be troubled if there were ‘insects’ approaching me?”

“It’s simple. In short, Touya-sama wanted to make Seiren-sama his own wife. Because Seiren-sama is Maya-sama’s one and only blood daughter.”

“What?”

“About Saryuu-sama becoming Shiiya family’s adopted child, too, it was done in order to deepen his connection to Meiya-sama. After all, it would give him a

reason to come and visit us.”

No, well, hello?

In other words, did he seriously want to take me as my mother’s replacement? Even Saryuu was used as an excuse so that he could come to see my mother? What’s up with this stalker? Not mine, but my mother’s stalker.

From behind me who was still brooding over things, Taiga-san spoke with a serious and low voice.

“...Father. I certainly know that you loved Maya-sama. However, it was already a story from roughly 30 years ago.”

“With just 30 years, there’s no way I can completely get over it.”

Whoa.

For saying that 30 years is not enough, it looks like a serious thing. In the first place, it was a story from far before Taiga-san and I were even born.

“However, as expected, it’s not like I can just snatch away someone else’s wife. Still, I thought that I could keep her blood-related daughter in my hands.”
“Whoa, gross.”

Sorry, my real thought slipped out of my mouth. No, well, isn’t that right, though?

It’s still fine if you can’t get over the woman who rejected you roughly 30 years ago. That alone won’t bother us. However, it aggravated to the extent that you wanted to make that woman’s daughter as your own wife, and since you didn’t want other men to get close to her, you turned her into a man? Don’t joke around, try to stand in my position.

In the first place, that shouldn’t be the reason why I should be brought up in a different world.

“Oh well. I know that you’re more persistent than me, but I have never thought that you’d go this far. Really.”

All of us turned towards the voice that was suddenly heard.

In front of our gazes which were quickly turned to that direction, one more person appeared. The person who shouldn’t even be here, the person that I know so well. It’s the person that has the same voice, the same face, and the same name as the person who I just kicked.

“...Orphanage director?”

“Oh, you’re Seiren? You’ve become so beautiful during the time I didn’t see you, as expected from Mondo-dono and Maya-dono’s daughter.”

With his usual shabby T-shirt and jersey, it was the figure that I was very familiar with—the orphanage director, Shikino Touya. He was able to quickly recognize me and smiled.

Chapter 56: The Unpleasant Midnight Truth

Inside the dark forest. Among everyone's dressed-up figures after the party, the only person with shabby clothes—the orphanage director briskly approached me with a nonchalant face. Noticing that, Taiga-san who was behind me talked close to my ears.

“Seiren-sama, can you stand?”

“Ah, yeah. I'm all right.”

Despite saying that I was all right, in the end, I slowly stood up with the help of Taiga-san. When I finally got to my feet the orphanage director was standing right in front of us. The face that looked at me once more with his usual grin was unmistakably the person who was like my father figure, the one who raised me for 18 years.

“...But, orphanage director, why?”

“If you ask me why, well...”

The director who seriously took my question which only consisted of a few words, was scratching his head as if he was being awkward. And then, he put away the small cloth that he was holding in his other hand as he heaved a small sigh.

“I was summoned here unexpectedly when I was in the middle of cleaning up the room. I have never thought that I'd come here again while I was still alive.”

Again, here.

In other words, the orphanage director was a person of this world?

“Seiren!”

“Seiren, are you all right?”

“Ane-sama!”

It was suddenly lively with the sound of footsteps, as my parents ran here, guided by Saryuu. There were Alica-san's figure still in her dress and Yuzuruha-san behind them, as if protecting them. Just like this, everyone was surprised upon seeing the orphanage director's face. I have talked with everyone else

except Yuzuruha-san, but as expected, being told about it is different from looking at it yourself, huh?

...Eh, only Saryuu nodded as if he just came to understand something. I wonder why?

“I’m all right. Taiga-san and Kuon-sensei saved me, after all.”

“Seiren-sama has me at her back. Please rest assured.”

Taiga-san also answered as his voice covered my answer just a little bit. ...behind, I couldn’t turn my head there. I don’t want to see what kind of face Taiga-san is making right now.

Perhaps, it’s a dejected expression, right? Because I’m right here after going through such weird sequence of events.

Amidst all this, the orphanage director looked at my father and my mother’s faces and then smiled fondly as if he was in a nostalgia.

“Mondo-dono, Maya-dono. Long time no see, huh?”

“Long time no see, you mean...”

“...Eh, could it be, Touya-dono?”

“Haha. Well, it’s not unreasonable for you to be surprised. After all, [Shikino Touya] has always been here, right? I heard it from the old man who summoned me here.”

From the orphanage director’s tone of voice, he was certainly their old acquaintances. However, for some reason, hmm-.

While I was still pondering over things, Saryuu turned up and asked me.

“Ane-sama. The one who raised Ane-sama, it was this person, right?”

“Ah, yup.”

“...Is that so. It means that what Jigen said was true, huh?”

Oi, don’t you go becoming convinced of something by yourself. Give me an explanation.

Or rather, isn’t Touya-san the person whose groin I kicked just now? Ah, which reminds me, Touya-san...

“It’s pointless even if you try to run away now, you know? This Kasai Jigen’s granddaughter won’t let you get away, after all.”

“L-let me go! Damn it, your magic spell, gwoo!”

...ah-, I finally could see Kuon-sensei's face, but although she was smiling, I could tell that she was angry. Anyway, Touya-san was being turned round and round as it felt like his feet were about to be rolled up with a rope that came out of nowhere. Since he said that it was a magic spell, I wonder if it was one of Kuon-sensei's magic?

The orphanage director's eyes were directed at that Touya-san. He lightly shrugged his shoulders and stated something strange.

"...I've said enough from long time ago that we were not twins, but you apparently managed to disguise yourself well, huh, Touka?"

"Touka?"

Eh, it's a name that I've ever heard before. Or more precisely, it's a name that I heard from Taiga-san.

"If I'm not wrong, Touya-san's younger brother hasn't been reburied yet..."
"Speaking of which, [Shikino Touka] was supposed to have passed away, huh? What a clever thing to do."

The one who said that with an amazed face was the orphanage director. He exchanged glances with my father and the others, and his facial expression turned grave.

Touya-san was supposed to have always been here all the time.

Touka-san was supposed to have passed away.

The orphanage director said so.

Then, apparently, Touya-san and Touka-san looked so much alike. Even my mother who had ever met Touka-san roughly around 40 years ago also said that the two of them sure looked so much alike.

"Uhm, then, in other words..."

"You know my name, don't you, Seiren?"

"Yes. It's Shikino Touya, orphanage director."

"Yes, that's how it is."

When I mentioned his name, the orphanage director narrowed his eyes and praised me just like the time when I got 100 points at a test.

Shikino Touya.

The orphanage director's real name is Shikino Touya. ...In other words, he is the

real head of Shikino family, Touya-san, is it?

If that's the case, the person who abducted me and gave his name, Touya, was, in other words...

"Father wasn't Shikino Touya—he was actually Touka all along, was it?"

Taiga-san muttered the conclusion with a sigh. Well, I guess it's something like that.

Wait, no, no, no. If it's serious, then isn't it bad?

"In other words, Touka-dono ostracized Touya-dono into another world, and pretended to be Touya-dono. It was something like that."

"Well, that explains why all the servants and employees were replaced. In addition, you properly erased any trace of it, didn't you?"

Tou-san said as he was scratching his head. Kuon-sensei bluntly stated with a smooth cold tone.

Come to think of it, Taiga-san said that he couldn't contact any of the Shikino servants who quit after receiving a large sum of money.

"S-shut up, shut up, shut up! I'm the son of the legal wife, and I can even use magic, I'm the superior one! Despite that, why was Aniki the successor, don't kid me!!"

Whoa, he broke down.

Or perhaps I should say, he put all of his power into his family quarrel.

The little brother who wasn't chosen as the successor was pissed off and expelled his elder brother into another world, then he snatched away his name and his everything, such a thing, huh.

I wonder if he didn't feel empty for having to live for 30 years by taking a false name?

...He probably didn't feel that way, right, this person?

He was under the impression that the position belonged to him, and if he could obtain that position, then...

Touka-san who felt an outrageous anger once more towards Touya-san who seemed to have snatched away that position—turned to face the orphanage director. Well, if only he hadn't come out here, then things won't turn out this way.

“In the first place, you bastard, why are you still alive?! Were you able to fly into a decent world under my half-baked transference magic?!”

“That’s well, fortunately, I fell into a world with humans and met kind people there. Besides, it’d be different if you threw a kid there, but I was already a splendid adult, you know? I somehow managed to live and get used to such a different life style.”

The orphanage director suddenly shrugged his shoulders and answered tottering. Well, I probably can understand why would that person get angry with such attitude that the orphanage director displayed.

But well, that seems to be the case. Touka-san doesn’t know anything about the world over there, after all. There are people who can still live through the day despite not having house there, even if it is by rummaging through the trash can. If you get to think that way, then you can survive in one way or another. Or perhaps I should say, so the one who threw the orphanage director in the other world was Touka-san. From his wording—about how the orphanage director managed to end up in a decent world with a half-baked technique, in other words, he didn’t care about where the orphanage director would end up at all. He is very detestable.

“Well, that’s enough about me. The problem is you, Touka.”

By the time Touka-san got considerably tired from clamouring about and closed his mouth, the orphanage director gave his counterattack. He slowly approached Touka-san and coldly looked down on his own little brother who was being tied and rolling over on the ground.

“I’m not so concerned about the fact that you replaced me and succeeded the Shikino family. You have properly done your job as a feudal lord, haven’t you? But well, let’s save it for later.”

The gaze that was pointed at me for a moment was the gentle gaze from the orphanage director that I was familiar with. But, how do I say it, he was overflowing with aura that he looked extremely scary. It wasn’t inferior to Kuon-sensei’s, but... well, it’s because he’s the person concerned, after all. That also applies for me, though.

“No well, even I also like Maya-dono, and thanks to that, even after 30 years

have passed, I'm still unmarried. However, it turned out that Touka also liked Maya-dono. His mother was so noisy about it that I had never talked about my feelings so openly."

If I'm not mistaken, the orphanage director and Touka-san had different mothers. Touka-san's mother was the legal wife, but because Touka-san was born only several weeks later than the orphanage director—or Touya-san, the one who became the heir was Touya-san instead.

But, can that alone decide the heir? For some reason, I felt like there were other considerations such as their personalities and such.

For example... For a feudal lord to want to lay a hand on the daughter of the woman he loved even after 30 years had passed, even after she had become someone else's wife, what would people say about it?

"Touka remained here. He then became the head of the Shikino family in my stead, and was thinking about taking some measures of an event that was drawing near."

"Yes. Just a while after that... Seiren-sama was born. Maya-sama's one and only blood-related daughter."

Touka-san tried to obtain that daughter which was me. And then now, things have turned out like this.

"If it's impossible to get the mother, then go for the daughter, huh? I'm not a fool who's willing to go that far like you!"

"Since there is no witness here, this is only my grandfather's conjecture, but. Perhaps in the beginning, the magician Doumu was supposed to act according to his master's plan, which was to take Seiren-sama back to the Shikino house on his own."

Eh-, what is that?

If you said it like that, then his visit right after I was born was something like a preview, wasn't it? Eh, could it be that...

"Then, our magician tried to stop him by resisting."

"Yes. Perhaps there was a certain kind of a barrier put up, and so any interference from outside couldn't be done. The ruins that resulted from the resistance were only of a small amount, but they remained."

By ruins, now that you mention it, Jigen-san reported that there were some strange magical remnants found. By barrier, it was a magician's wall, so I wonder if the ruins were parts of something that formed the wall? Uhm, as usual, I was trying to run away from the reality, huh? I wonder why I could be calm at this kind of time only. ...Could it be because there was Taiga-san behind me?

"So, our magician performed the transference magic in order to protect Seiren-sama at any cost. His attempt on trying to escape from the inner side of the magic wall resulted in Seiren-sama being transferred to the other world, is it?"

"That magician perhaps noticed my presence at that time. Then, he sent Seiren to my place. However, right before that, Doumu performed a magic spell on Seiren and turned him into a man. It was so that no man other than Touka would ever lay a hand on her even if she were to go to a different world, is that so?"

The orphanage director nodded and continued Kuon-sensei's words. Aah, that's why I was picked up by the orphanage director. Because the magician sent me to be picked up by someone who was also transported from the same world.

"Are you an idiot? What are you going to do if Seiren didn't return until her death?"

"Then, that's it. That way, she won't be someone else's woman other than mine, anyway."

Touka-san's nasal breathing resounded as he replied peevishly. ...I feel bad for Taiga-san who is his biological son, but this person is really revolting.

Chapter 57: The Shocking Midnight Truth

Alica-san who had been watching the scene up until then was lightly tilting her head. She timidly stepped forward and turned to face the orphanage director.

“How should I put it... Touya-sama, is it? Then, you know that Seiren-sama is a girl?”

“Well, of course I know it. Because there’s this.”

The orphanage director narrowed his eyes with a complacent smile and spread the thing that he was holding for some time ago to show it at us. It was a small blue one piece. Its size was just right for a baby’s clothes. Looking at it, my parents’ expressions changed unabashedly. My father muttered a few words.

“That was... what Seiren was wearing when she disappeared...”

“I figured so. It’s the sleep-wear that Seiren wore when she came to my place. No matter how you look at it, it’s a girl’s.”

Aah, yup. With that fluttering frills, it’s certainly a girl’s clothes. So that was the clothes I was wearing at that time. I was wearing it when the orphanage director picked me up.

“I can’t use magic just like Touka, but I can at least read the magic language. Since it was strange for a boy to be wearing a girl’s clothes, I quickly understood what kind of magic spell was used.”

The orphanage director explained as if he was talking about some ordinary everyday topic as he suddenly lifted one of his legs and folded the one piece. I also folded the laundry on top of my knee occasionally. I was scolded several times when I did it while sitting down.

Jigen-san has also said that if you memorized the magic language, you’d be able to figure out what kind of magic spell was used. The orphanage director had properly studied it during his time being here. Even so, unlike his little brother, Touka-san, he had no talent for magic.

“However, I couldn’t erase the magic spell. I had no choice but to raise her as

a man. I was glad because her name was there in the embroidery, but... this embroidery, was it Maya-dono's...?"

"Eh, ah, yes. I left her care to the wet nurse, but I thought that I should at least do that much for my daughter."

My mother nodded in a fluster towards the orphanage director who finished folding and pointed to the one piece's collar. I see, so my name was embroidered over there. The orphanage director read that and named me Seiren.

"I see. Then, although it's been 18 years, but I'm returning this. This is an precious gift that Maya-dono gave to Seiren, after all."

The orphanage director put the one piece on top of my mother's hand and sighed a bit. It was as if he just completed a difficult task. My mother was still looking at the director blankly, perhaps she was still unable to comprehend the situation.

The orphanage director turned to face this direction—or Touka-san, to be more precise, and said, "Now, then." At that moment, the smiling face that he was making up until then suddenly disappeared. Whoa, it was his angry face now!

"W-what are you—"

"No, no matter what the circumstances might be, I don't want to make a disgraceful behavior of a Shikino to be known to public. Your personality is something else, but as a feudal lord, you seemed to have been working on your duties properly. And your heir seemed to be capable and good enough."

The orphanage director was perhaps glancing at Taiga-san who was behind me. After he seemed to be smiling happily for a moment, he quickly returned his gaze towards Touka-san.

"Please be obedient and resign, Touka."

"What?!"

"I was telling you to retire and stay confined in the countryside, and to leave the rest to the young man over there to succeed you. Otherwise, I'll quickly spread what you've done until now. If things go that way, the Shikino house will also suffer the damage."

"D-don't joke around! I'll make Maya's daughter as my bride, and then..."

“Please just do what Uncle told you, Father.”

The objection that Touka-san threw from his mouth after confessing his crimes and took the hard punch out of it was ceased by the awfully cold voice that could be heard from behind me. I even forgot the fact that I didn't want to see his face and turned around in a fluster.

Taiga-san was staring at Touka-san with eyes that didn't contain any shred of emotion. He didn't even have the same expression as the orphanage director, and it was horribly scary. I could tell with just a glance that he was really angry. I thought that he was surely looking at me with the very same eyes as now, but.

“Seiren-sama, please wait a little bit. Saryuu.”

Taiga-san who said that to me as he lightly held my shoulders was still the same gentle young man that I knew very well. For some reason, I was so happy that I felt like crying.

He gently pat my shoulders and pushed me towards Saryuu. After that, Taiga-san approached Touka-san. Aah, his back even emitted his anger.

“Taiga! You, even though you're my own son! W-what's more, you even considered marrying that man-woman!”

“Yes, I'm certainly your son. However, I'm also the next head of the Shikino family. In addition...”

Taiga-san stopped talking and casually grasped Touka-san's scruff of the neck. He suddenly lifted it up and pulled it closer until Touka-san's face was just right in front of his eyes.

“The one who brought such hardships to Seiren-sama was you yourself. You don't have any right whatsoever to insult her like that.”

“Gah!”

There was a dull sound as Taiga-san's fist smashed into Touka-san's cheek. Whoa, since he was hit with his seized neck like that, he couldn't escape from Taiga-san's power at all. It seemed to be painful.

“Besides, even if I wanted to pursue a relationship with Seiren-sama, it is totally irrelevant to your desire, isn't it?”

...Uhm. I felt like I've been told something so embarrassing without any

hesitation. Look, even Saryuu who was standing next to me was covering his own face.

Leaving behind my feelings which were still in a mess, Taiga-san hit his biological father once more. This time it was his knee that hit Touka-san's stomach. Then, he nonchallantly threw away Touka-san's body. At any rate, he couldn't defend himself in such a position and thus, he could only make weird sounds when he hit the ground.

When Taiga-san turned around, his face looked refreshed. Perhaps it was because he managed to land two hits like that, even despite Touka-san being his biological father... so I thought, but well, if I was in Taiga-san's place, I'd also hit Touka-san, for sure.

"Shikino's disgrace should be settled with a Shikino's hands as well. We will punish him properly, and Father will be retiring. Though I think that our punishment isn't enough with just that."

"No, that's fine. In the first, place it was a crime that was done by Touka-dono who went mad alone, so it shouldn't be Taiga-dono or the Shikino family's problem to take punishments in his behalf as well. Don't you think so, Maya?"

"That's right. I'll be leaving the decision to you, dear."

"Yes, thank you very much for your lenient judgement."

...Ah-, I was relieved. No, I mean, I was thinking of what I should do if any punishment was also given to Taiga-san.

After all, Taiga-san also investigated a lot of things for me, and he also came to save me.

"Is it finished, then-?"

"It seems like that. Perhaps we should still be cautious of this old geezer's magic until his time to return tomorrow morning. Although he self-studied magic, but his magic skill was apparently quite good."

Whoa, Oriza-san and Jigen-san, just when did they come here? Everyone including the orphanage director was surprised.

Among those gazes, the grandfather walked slowly while lightly shaking the wand he held in his hand, and then, the surrounding plants simultaneously grew longer. The vines, the leaves, and everything else, in no time they finished turning the old geezer into a plant roll. Just what was that?

“Oh my, Grandfather. Thank you for your hard work.”

“Good grief, really. As expected, it’s really tiring to improve my transference magic skill within these 4 months.”

“Oh, old man. Thank you for bringing me back here.”

“Don’t mention it. I’ve heard the story from Seiren-sama, but I’ve never thought that you were actually a person of Shikino family.”

Jigen-san then laughed, “Hohoho!”—a typical laugh for an old man like himself, and he also tapped his waist. No matter in which world it might be, this kind of typical gesture was still the same.

Hmm, I see. So Jigen-san was summoning the orphanage director during his time locked up inside the ritual room. As a witness to what Touka-san has done. As a person who acted as my guardian from before.

Minoa-san was carrying Touka-san... uhm, and his close aide, Saiga-san in both of her sides, heading to the direction of the prepared carriage, guided by Yuzuruha-san. There still remained a dim light from the dismantled carriage. Taiga-san and Saryuu were there by my side the whole time. Actually, there’s supposed to be an interrogation to what his father had done, but since my father’s here, then it’d be fine to leave the task to him.

That’s right. Taiga-san, it was very unexpected that his father could do lots of awful things and how they were completely unknown to him. And then, uhm. That, I mean... I feel happy because Taiga-san is there with me.

“...Uncle.”

Taiga-san who hadn’t said anything suddenly turned to face the orphanage director as if he just remembered something.

“No. I mean, I have a request to another father who has brought up Seiren before. That is, if I’m allowed to ask of it.”

“To me? What is it?”

Uhm, well, to me, the orphanage director was certainly someone who was like a substitute for my father.

I wonder what request he would like to ask from the orphanage director.

“I want your consent to marry Seiren.”

“What?”

I reflexively said that in my surprise. Saryuu who was beside me also muttered, “Oh my-.” And my parents as well as Kuon-sensei, I noticed that you guys just gushed out. Look, Alica-san’s face was also stiffening, wasn’t it? Oriza-san started to laugh!

Or perhaps I should say, no, no, no, no.

Taiga-san, you fully understood that I was a man until this spring, right? Is that okay?

“Hey. Uhm, your name is...?”

“It’s Taiga.”

Meanwhile, the orphanage director asked his name in his astonishment. He then inclined his head curiously towards Taiga-san who answered frankly.

“Yes, then, Taiga. In the first place, you got the wrong person whose consent you should be asking for.”

“Eh?”

“It’s not ‘eh?’!”

Well, I think so, too. But why would he suddenly ask it to the orphanage director... no, wait, no, no, hang in there, me.

Or rather, don’t escape from the reality at this kind of situation. This is something that’s concerning me.

That’s why, is it okay? I mean, it’s me. I’m the weird daughter who was tossed into a different world and was turned into a man thanks to a magic spell.

“Mondo-dono and I proposed to Maya-dono together in person back then, and Maya-dono chose Mondo-dono. Do you understand what I’m getting at?”

“...Eh-, ah-. U-un-understood.”

Eh-, ah-.

That’s what I wanted to say. Why would it turn into this kind of a conversation?

Or, uhm, what is it? My face was hot. I tried to touch my own face spontaneously, and as expected, it was hot for some reason. I wonder why?

Then, look. Everyone else including Jigen-san who was calm until earlier was making a broad grin while watching the scene. I wonder what kind of impression they had from watching me?

“...Seiren-sama.”

“Y-yes?”

Whoa, my voice was unstable. Or well, what is with this situation? Just when did Taiga-san come in front of me and knelt there?
Why is that cool face of his getting so red?

“Are you willing to become my wife?”

“Eh, ah, eh, that, uhm...”

Why are you saying such things? Isn't this weird?

“I-I, I was it, you know? Up to this spring, I was a man, you know?”

“Yes, I have heard about it. What's with it, then?”

“No. I mean... doesn't that make you uncomfortable?”

“Why would I be? If I left you because of it, then it's my fault. After all, the one who put that magic spell on you was my own father.”

Taiga-san's face was bright red but he could look at me with straight eyes. Those eyes haven't changed at all from when I first met him. It was as if nothing changed despite the fact that he knew everything now. Although Taiga-san hadn't done anything bad at all, he said that as if it was his own fault, as well. Though he knew just about everything, and yet.

“I would like you, the current you who's standing in front of me, to come to my side.”

I give up.

If he said such a thing, then I've lost any kind of reason to refuse. Or rather, is it fine if I don't refuse?

I'm glad.

“...Uhm. I don't mind about Touka-san. In the first place, I don't get why Taiga-san is also at fault.”

That's why, first of all, I conveyed it clearly. And then, I need to say what needs to be said. After all, if I don't do that, it won't be conveyed to him, so.

“I had been living apart from my father and my mother until this spring. That's why, I want to spend at least one year together with them.”

“Yes.”

Taiga-san seemed to feel like, “That’s true,” and nodded. Thank you. I might make you wait for me, but if you’re still fine with that.

“That’s why, uhm... Will you wait until the spring next year? If you change your mind during that time, uhm, like if another person uhm, appears, perhaps...”

“Then, let’s go out under the premise of marriage.”

What an instant answer. Moreover, he smiled as if he was extremely happy. ...Speaking of being happy, uhm what is it...

I wonder if I have really turned into a proper woman now?

“T-then, please take care of me.”

With a completely different kind of resolution from the one I had before the party started, I bowed my head. Eeh, enough, I don’t care about everyone else’s gaze at all!

Chapter 58: Now Then, Breakfast Conversation

I opened my eyes abruptly.

When I got up, I was in my own bed properly. I was also wearing a sleep-wear properly, so there didn't seem to be any problem.

Let me be honest. I actually didn't really remember how I managed to return to my own room and sleep. I just remembered up to the point when Taiga-san sent me off halfway and said good night at the entrance.

After thinking for a while with a blank mind, I suddenly remembered.

[Seiren-sama. Are you willing to become my wife?]

Just then, my face grew hotter. Eeh, just what am I thinking this early in the morning?

Or well, we had a party last night, and then I was abducted afterward, and after that, uhm, Touya-san wasn't Touya-san, but he was actually Touka-san, and the orphanage director appeared. What a drastic turn of events.

"...Ah-, uhm, it... it wasn't a dream, right? Yes."

"It's fine to make different kind of faces, but will you please snap out of it already, Seiren-sama?"

"Oh, hwa?!"

I was so surprised because someone called my name so suddenly that I almost fell out of the bed. Yes.

When I turned around in a fluster, Alica-san was looking at me with an astonished face. Unlike her figure in a dress from yesterday, she returned to wearing her usual maid-styled uniform today.

Or rather, since she was looking at me from inside the room, that would mean that the door was already opened, huh? Yup, I didn't even notice it, I really need to snap out of it.

"G-good morning, Alica-san."

"Good morning, Seiren-sama. I've also brought you some hot water, please feel free to use it."

"Ah-, ye~s!"

Once I greeted her, Alica-san showed a bitter smile and handed me the thing she was holding.

I wiped my face with a towel that was soaked with hot water and refreshed my mind with it.

No, well, I mean, yes, that wasn't a dream, or so it seemed. It seemed like I ended up being Taiga-san's fiancée now. Hehe, I feel happy.

Happy, huh.

Or rather, hey, since when have I really become a woman? As expected, is it the influence of my body which was changed into a woman's?

As I got down from my bed while thinking about it, Oriza-san came in to bring my clothes. When I noticed her, she was smiling at me.

"Seiren-samaa, good morning-. Have you gotten awake properly-?"

"Ah, Oriza-san. Morning."

"Ufufu, I'll show you something good right now-"

"Something good?"

I wonder what it is? As I inclined my head in confusion, Oriza-san pointed out several times below the window. Aah, as usual, Saryuu should be doing his morning practice, huh. Let me see.

"Good morning, Seiren-sama!"

...

W-why is Taiga-san there? Ah no, since he is Saryuu's big brother, it won't be weird for him to be saying that he was accompanying Saryuu's morning practice, but, eeeeeeeeh?!

"You had an opening!"

And so, Saryuu swung his wooden sword overhead towards Taiga-san who was smiling at me. However, in the next moment, Taiga-san lightly swung a hit to Saryuu's side and landed his counterattack. I thought that it was a light hit, but Saryuu seemed to be in pain. He was frowning.

"Hahaha, you're still lacking of skill, Saryuu."

"Ouch, ouch... Ane-sama, good morning."

Together with a nonchalant Taiga-san, Saryuu also greeted me even while he was grimacing. If you look at them like this, it seems like they are a pair of close

brothers, so I think.

“...Ah, yeah, good morning. By the way, what are you doing?”

“Nah, since Saryuu said that he wanted to practice for real, I went out all-in to him. Hahaha!!”

“Saryuu said that?”

The reason why Taiga-san was there was just as I guessed. Well, he certainly would make a better sword sparring partner in comparison to the people in our house. But why, though?

“Yes! Because I still have something I ought to do!”

“Something you ought to do?”

“Yes. I need to protect my big sister until the day Ane-sama marries my Nii-sama!”

Looking at me who was greatly perplexed, I felt like Alica-san and Oriza-san were making the same face as they muttered, “Ah-.”

No, well, the proposal last night was totally real, huh? No, I mean, I have accepted it, too. We’re in a relationship for the time being, though.

...Ane-sama and Nii-sama, huh. I wonder if Saryuu is happy because I’ll be with Taiga-san? If that’s the case, then I’m also happy.

Wait, time is running out.

“Uhm, ah-, yeah. I’ll be expecting you, then... By the way, it’s breakfast time soon.”

“Ooh, it’s already at that time, huh. Then, Saryuu, let’s continue this later on.”

“Yes. Thank you very much!”

Taiga-san smoothly stored his wooden sword at his hips and Saryuu-san sternly straightened himself and bowed. That sort of actions looked so cool, right? As expected of Taiga-san’s little brother, so I thought. No, he’s also my little brother, though.

Then, Taiga-san turned to face me and showed a dazzling smile.

“Well then, Seiren-sama. I will also be joining you in breakfast time, so let’s meet again later.”

“Ah, yes.”

I wanted to say, “Until later,” but my voice didn’t come out.

Ah-, this is bad, why is Taiga-san so cool?

Or rather, seriously, calm down, me! Perhaps I'd be like a girl in love in other people's eyes, no matter how you look at it.

"Seiren-sama is a maiden in love, right-?"

"Sssh! I understand it, though!"

...Yes, as expected, I looked like that way in their eyes, yup.

Oh well, anyway, I need to get changed for breakfast. I wore a pink and white two-toned one piece and had my hair being put together behind my back, and walked towards the people waiting for me in front of the dining room. There were Taiga-san and one more person.

"Seiren-sama!"

Oh, morning, Seiren. Did you sleep well?"

"Ah, orphanage director. Good morning."

It was the orphanage director who suddenly appeared yesterday. When I looked at him all out of a sudden, I was so surprised. The orphanage director was properly wearing the garments of this world. Speaking of which, he was slightly shorter than Taiga-san.

Despite having the same face as Touka-san, he was like a completely different person if I were to look at him like this.

...Nonetheless, my father and the others weren't there, so there wasn't any opportunity to compare him, though. So it can't be helped that I haven't noticed it until now.

"You stayed here last night, didn't you?"

"Well, yeah. I had to explain lots of things to your parents, that grandpa, and Taiga."

The expression that the orphanage director had as he looked at Taiga-san felt like a mischievous child's gaze. Taiga-san who had a bitter smile seemed more adult-like than him, and I wonder what I should be thinking of this spectacle. Although that side of him is also fine.

"Even so, when I take another look at you, you have gotten so pretty, huh, Seiren."

"What? Nah, I'm not even aware of it, though."

Uhm, oiii, I wish you didn't say such a thing so suddenly like that. No, moreover, he did it in front of Taiga-san, wait, why did Taiga-san's name appear here? I never expected that a woman's heart would be this bothersome. Whoa-, things seem difficult from now on, for me.

"Besides, you came here approximately 3 months ago, right? I have been looking for you the whole time. Also, that means I haven't seen you for 3 months."

"W-well, that's how things look like, huh..."

"That's how they are. The people who have been away for quite a long time are the ones who usually notice the changes made in the meantime."

The orphanage director put his hand on my head and lightly pat me. If it goes as how it usually is, he'd be stirring my hair up, but... aah, I had my hair put together, so he was taking that into consideration.

"Now, time to eat. Let's go, Seiren. Taiga, you must escort her at any cost, since she's your future bride."

"Yes-, wait-?"

"That's right. Shall we go, Seiren-sama?"

Uhm, Taiga-san. Can you please not take on the orphanage director's teasing as if it's enjoyable? Ah-well, it can't be helped that my face felt hot because of it, right?

When my father, my mother, and Saryuu arrived and all members were complete, we had a breakfast while being—how do I say it—enveloped in a delicate tension. Well, I mean, we just found out yesterday that the orphanage director got his identity stolen, and as for Taiga-san, well. Nah, just what am I getting at, me.

Amidst all of it, the orphanage director who couldn't really read the situation, inquired something that perhaps everyone would like to ask.

"Speaking of which, what happened to that Touka guy? Did the grandpa take charge of him?"

"Kuon said that he was mentally knocked down. Well, with that, he won't think of any bad idea again, right?"

"Mentally... is it?"

“Yes, mentally.”

My father sighed a little. When you think of it, well, it was about a friend that he has known for many years, after all.

Then, my mother’s smile as she replied Saryuu’s question like a parrot looked totally scary. Why would she show that kind of smile at a time like this, it was totally so impactful.

For the time being, let’s stop thinking of what happened. I feel like I don’t have to see it until it’s finally time to see.

Even so, why would the orphanage director come out with the talk about Touka-san? There are his two biological sons here.

“Aah, it’s impossible even if I tell Taiga to not mind it, right? Since Saryuu has been with the Shiiya family ever since you were very small, you might get a little shocked, but...”

“...That’s right. My surname has already become Shiiya ever since I was around 6 years old, so even if you told me that about my biological father, I didn’t really...”

...So it’s like that, huh. Well, perhaps it was like me becoming the orphanage director’s son ever since I became aware of things, and then suddenly there appeared two people who claimed to be my parents, perhaps I’d just tilt my head in confusion—something like that, huh? No, wait, is that wrong?

Chapter 59: Farewell, Orphanage Director

When we finished our breakfast, the tea was brought in. The type of tea that I drunk first is actually the most popular type of tea in this world. The orphanage director smiled and said, “Oh-, I’ve missed this!” as he tasted the tea. After drinking one sip of his tea, my father looked straight at Taiga-san.

“Taiga-dono should also return home after this and quickly file the notice for your succession as the head of the family.”

“Yes. Though I think the procedure is quite difficult, I’ll try my best.”

So there are things such as filing a notice and a legal procedure. While I was wondering if there was any public office like that, the orphanage director placed his cup and heaved a small sigh.

“Before performing your duties as a feudal lord, it’s necessary for you to clean up the house as the head of the family.”

“That’s right. Ever since 30 years ago, the servants that are currently present in the Shikino house are mostly Touka-dono’s people who would move in accordance to his orders.”

“By removing his close aide, Saiga, it will be quite difficult to manage the residence from now on.”

Ah-. I can somehow understand what my father and mother are talking about. The family quarrels that I’ve seen in historical play were mostly settled with the narration after beating the mastermind and their underlings, but in actuality, things don’t work that way. Cleaning up after such a quarrel is going to be so difficult, huh?

Especially in this case, though it’s good that we’ve beaten Touka-san and Saiga-san, there still remained their subordinates in the Shikino house. Taiga-san, I wonder if he’d be all right?

When I looked at his face at a glance, he smiled as if he was all fine. And just like that, Taiga-san nodded and told my parents and the orphanage director, “I’m fine.”

“It’s a major thing to do, but even if I’m young, I also have some capable

subordinates. Besides, there are also people who've been there with us just like Saya." (Taiga)

"Saya?"

"She's a maid who was also my wet nurse. She is Kaya's little sister." (Saryuu)

"Ah, I've heard about it before. I see, so she's called Saya-san."

Saryuu has ever told me about it once, so I knew Kaya-san's little sister's name. I see, so she's still in the Shikino house.

Because her little sister was Saryuu's wet nurse, Kaya-san became fond of Saryuu. That didn't change even after 3 months ever since I came here, but it seemed like Kaya-san understood that I had no motivation to become the successor of this family, so she wasn't as strict to me as before.

Nah, she is still strict to me, but I think perhaps that's because she doesn't want me to do anything disgraceful because I'm the daughter of the Shiiya family.

Though Oriza-san often sulked like, "Kaya-san is sooo strict—!"

However, since that Kaya-san's little sister is Taiga-san's ally, I feel like everything will be all right, somehow. Though I have no basis whatsoever to say that.

"Yeah. Since Saya's also there, I'll make sure to clean up the Shikino house completely before welcoming Seiren-sama."

"I'll entrust that to you, okay-? Clean it up until it sparkles, Taiga."

That-is-why.

Taiga-san who could say such a thing calmly, and the orphanage director who answered as if it was natural, give me a break. Really, I can't hide my face with just a cup of tea.

Both my father and my mother also seemed like they were having fun. Give me a break, really.

"Show me what you've got, as the new head of family. If something were to happen, I'll lend you my power, so long as it's within my capability."

"That's right. We're connected because Saryuu is being taken care by us, after all, so we'll properly cooperate with you."

"Thank you very much, Mondo-dono, Maya-dono."

"Don't mention it. Today, I'm putting Yuzuruha-san as Touka-dono's escort. I've told the circumstances and handed some documents. Make good use of it."

“Yes. Then, I’ll do so without any reservation.”

To my father’s concern, Taiga-san smiled and bowed his head happily. Aah, I see, it’s so that the things occurring here won’t turn into any big problem, or so it won’t be carried away to the other area, huh.

When the tea time was almost finished, the orphanage director turned around to look at everyone inside the room. Then, he said a few words with a tone that seemed as if he was saying something totally ordinary.

“Nnn—. I should also go home soon.”

“Eh?”

What did he say so abruptly... so I thought, and everyone in the room, including me, focused our gazes at the orphanage director. By going home, where is he referring to... Like, the Shikino’s residence? That didn’t seem like it. Which means...

“By going home... did you mean to the other world?”

“Yeah. The grandpa also said that it’d be easy to connect the two worlds yesterday and today. It’d be hard if we have to search and pinpoint the world again.”

I don’t quite understand what the orphanage director said, but in short, it’d be easier to return to the other world as soon as possible, huh. That’s why, he’s got to go home immediately.

...To the other world, huh.

I can’t go home, eh? Because everyone over there only knows me as a man, so there won’t be... any meaning in returning there, right?

Besides, Taiga-san is also here.

“Touya-dono, you’re not going to remain here?”

“No, well, there’s already a new head for the Shikino family. I’ve been living there for 30 years, so there have been various things there.”

To my mother’s question, the orphanage director shrugged his shoulders. That’s right, I was raised at the institution that belonged to the orphanage director. I’ve returned home, but there are still some children in that institution.

“Aah. Speaking of which, is everyone in the institution doing well?”

“Yeah, everyone’s fine and full of spirit. I’ve also told them that you’ve returned

to the house where you were born. I'm glad that it was the truth."

"The institution, is it?"

Aah-, I'm glad. The orphanage director had properly explained the thing that happened to me to everyone else. Next to me who felt relieved, Saryuu asked. That's right, the only people here who knew about the institution are just me and the orphanage director. I have to properly explain it.

"There's an institution that takes care of the children who have no parents just like me, or the children who can't live with their parents because of some circumstances. And he's the director of that orphanage or institution."

"I was indebted to the person who was the previous orphanage director over there. So, I took their role over afterward."

The orphanage director continued my explanation while laughing. Everyone went, "Aahh," and nodded. Of course, me too. So that kind of thing happened, huh. That's why the orphanage director worked really hard in order to protect the institution when various problems occurred. I was really raised by a truly good person.

"Well, and that's why I can't just leave those children alone. I'm sorry."

".....No. If that's the case, then it can't be helped."

"We're talking about Touya-dono who has brought up Seiren to be such a good child. He would certainly raise the other children to be good children, wouldn't he?"

"Haha, they're nothing but brats, just like me, though."

The face of the orphanage director who talked to my father and my mother who are his old friends, really looked like a brat's face.

To send the orphanage director off, all of us went to the front of the ritual room. Jigen-san had already prepared things and seemed to be waiting for us inside the room. It seemed like the orphanage director had planned to return quickly from the very beginning. The clothes that he wore yesterday had been folded, and he brought it along, too. It looked like he was planning to return with the clothes he was wearing right now, I wonder if it's okay...

After coming in front of the door, the orphanage director turned around. He smiled, and that smile seemed a little bit lonely.

“Well then, it’s fine to just accompany me until here. You wouldn’t want to watch me at the moment I disappear, would you?”

“...”

Yes. I don’t want to see it.

When I first came to this world, I felt like my hand slipped through the door and I was in an empty place somehow, or how do I put it.

Uhm, it made me feel quite flaky? To be honest, I don’t want to feel it the second time. I don’t want to recall that moment, after all.

“...Touya-dono.”

“Mondo-dono. Maya-dono has chosen you, so take care of her until the very end, without fail. Maya-dono, too, live happily with him.”

“O-of course. You don’t need to tell me that.”

“Of course. ...I’m glad to see you.”

I wonder if my father and my mother felt this close with the orphanage director back then? They were good friends, weren’t they?

My father hugged my mother’s shoulder as if confirming his resolution, and the orphanage director moved his gaze towards Saryuu.

“Saryuu, it’s okay to like your big sister, but keep it moderate, okay? You need to grow up well and find a good wife.”

“Yes, Uncle! I will try hard and become a man better than Nii-sama.”

“Yes, yes, well said! Do your best.”

The orphanage director brushed Saryuu’s head gently, it was a scene that I used to experience during my time as a man. At least, his expression remained the same.

And then the orphanage director’s eyes moved towards me and Taiga-san who was standing next to me. Aah, it was the gaze of the person who’s always taken care of me, my father figure.

“Be well, Seiren. You have to be happy.”

“...Yes.”

Somehow, this seemed like a real farewell, so I can’t say anything else other than that.

Despite the fact that we are only going to be in different worlds.

If something were to happen, we'd surely be able to meet again, but...
...Is that true?

"Taiga. If you make Seiren unhappy, I will come back here once more and beat you up."

"Yes. Pardon me, but I won't let that happen."

The orphanage director said that, and Taiga-san answered while making a small laugh, and after that...

"Seiren-sama. It's fine if you want to come closer."

The moment my back was pushed, I couldn't hold it back any longer. I rushed off along with the momentum, and embraced the orphanage director. Ah-, I can't, I shouldn't cry. Stop crying, damn it.

"Directo...!"

"Yes, yes, really, why would you cry during the last moment, you little..."

The orphanage director seemed to be troubled as he pat my back. Even though you're in front of me like this at this very moment, I won't be able to see you very soon. The person that I was hugging so tightly, very soon, he was going to return. My beloved... father.

"Really. You've turned into a crybaby ever since you've turned back into a woman, huh? Taiga is going to be a bit jealous, is that okay?"

While making a strained laugh, the orphanage director suddenly mentioned Taiga-san's name. Eh-, what's wrong with it... Ah, could it be, because I'm hugging the orphanage director? It can't be helped, right? Damn it. Aah well, I don't understand what to say at a time like this.

"You're my uncle, and you're also another father figure for Seiren-sama, so it's fine. But well, to be honest, I envy you a little bit."

"Ooh, envy, huh? Then, hold on to her. Don't let go of her until your heart stops beating."

The next moment after he said those words, the orphanage director suddenly removed my arms. Just like that, my body was pushed back. I think that my back hit Taiga-san's chest.

Taiga-san's hand which he put at my shoulder was really warm. As he held me a little bit strongly, instead of feeling pain, I felt relieved instead.

Ah, for some reason, I understand.

The place where I belong is really here.

"I understand."

"Then, that's good."

The orphanage director smiled as if he felt truly relieved at me who was wiping away my tears, and then at Taiga-san who was looking. Then, he turned his back.

"Then, I'm off."

Thud.

In front of the door which was tightly shut, I couldn't move for a moment.

Sorry, Taiga-san, everyone.

Just for a moment, let me stay like this.